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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**PROTECTING THE STATUS QUO: THE DEFENSE  
AGAINST A RUSSIAN COLOR REVOLUTION**

by

Timothy D. Conley

December 2017

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Leo Blanken  
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**PROTECTING THE STATUS QUO: THE DEFENSE AGAINST A RUSSIAN  
COLOR REVOLUTION**

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B.S., University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2005

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines Russia's reaction to the recent electoral revolutions and mass protest movements across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, all of which the Russians labeled "color revolutions." More explicitly, it analyzes Russian understanding of the color revolution threat, the Russian security forces' actions to address vulnerabilities to the threat, the non-military actions taken to minimize the threat, and the military efforts made to both support and to gain the support of Russia's regional allies.

Russia's understanding and reaction to the color revolution threat is one largely driven by the West's perceived role in color revolutions. Russia has succeeded in severing the ties between Western democratization efforts and Russian civil society, while Russia's new National Guard strengthens the tie between the Kremlin and the country's internal coercive forces. However, Russia's military has largely not reacted to the threat, and the country's efforts to gain allies against the threat have received only half-hearted support. Overall, Russia's anti-color revolution strategy, if it can be called a strategy, has been executed unevenly across the various ministries; but understanding how Russia perceives and reacts to the threat is essential, especially if Russia uses what it has learned to foment a color revolution in a NATO country.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
FSB	Federal Security Service
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MVD	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NDMC	National Defense Management Center
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Somewhere in a windowless room in the basement of the Pentagon, a group of men and women high-fived themselves for their successful operation to bring down Slobodan Milosevic.<sup>1</sup> This group, made up of members of the Department of Defense, Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Central Intelligence Agency, appeared to have perfected the method of uniting a political opposition by using mass protest and propaganda to bring down an anti-American government with an unconstitutional coup. Did this occur? Probably not, but it appears to be the scene many in the Kremlin imagine to have happened.

The Russians seem to believe that the United States government was able to plan and execute a campaign of replacing foreign governments with leaders more friendly to the United States. However, anyone with experience working in or with the United States government would likely say that the idea of such a well-orchestrated plan requiring a large amount of interagency cooperation with a consistent and concerted effort made over a period of time spanning almost 15 years is very unlikely.

This thesis examines the resulting Russian defensive reaction from the *perceived threat* that Russia sees in mass protests and their associated color revolutions.<sup>2</sup> It examines both the Russian understanding of the threat and the practical steps taken to address its vulnerabilities to the threat. It focuses on Russia's security forces but also

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<sup>1</sup> Slobodan Milosevic was the president of Serbia and lost the Serbian presidential election in 2000 in what is commonly referred to as the Bulldozer Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> The color revolutions, which have also been labeled as electoral revolutions, democratizing elections, or mass protest movements, are generally understood to be non-violent protests as a result of perceived electoral fraud and are labeled as color revolutions because of the color associated with the political opposition. The most well-known color revolutions are the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. However, since this thesis will discuss a threat as the Russians perceive it, it will adopt the Russian definition for a color revolution. Using the definition General Gerasimov presented at the 2014 Moscow Conference on International Security, this thesis will accept that a color revolution is a "a form of non-violent change of power in a country by outside manipulation of the protest potential of the population in conjunction with political, economic, humanitarian and other non-military measures." Anthony H. Cordesman, "Russia and the 'Color Revolution': A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the U.S. and the West," May 28, 2014, [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/140529\\_Russia\\_Color\\_Revolution\\_Full.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140529_Russia_Color_Revolution_Full.pdf).



briefly discusses how non-military steps have been taken to support those forces as well. Overall, it shows that while Russia has certainly reacted to its perception of the color revolution threat, this reaction can by no means be taken as driven solely by the threat of a color revolution in Russia, or as a specific anti-color revolution strategy that is tightly controlled and coordinated by a single entity in the Kremlin.

#### **A. THE THREAT AS RUSSIA SEES IT**

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, a time of transition began as the newly created states moved towards more democratic norms. However, while some, like the Baltic states, transitioned quickly to liberal democracy, others clung to more autocratic forms of governance.<sup>3</sup> With considerable funding and support from public and private sources in the West, many post-communist countries did away with their long-ruling presidents, or in the case of Ukraine, his anointed successor. This was done through electoral revolutions in countries such as Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, which have become more popularly known as color revolutions because of the colors that became associated with support for the opposition.<sup>4</sup>

Leaders in Russia clearly saw these revolutions as a threat to their sphere of influence in the former Soviet-dominated region and even to the current governing regime in Russia. Russian leaders characterized this threat as a Western attack against the sovereignty of nations, one in which Western funds supported opposition groups, youth movements, local non-governmental organizations (NGO), and opposition-friendly media. However, this concern over Western encroachment into countries traditionally located within Russia's sphere of influence likely increased significantly after the electoral protests in Moscow in 2011–2012 and the Arab Spring.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Many terms are used for these types of governments, such as hybrid regimes, mixed governments, electoral autocracies, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Lincoln A. Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Graeme Robertson, "Protesting Putinism: The Election Protests of 2011–2012 in Broader Perspective," *Problems of Post-Communism* 60, no. 2 (2013): 11–23; Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (London: Zed Books, 2012); George Joffé, "The Arab Spring in North Africa: Origins and Prospects," *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 4 (2011): 507–32.

Comments by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in support of the protests in Moscow in 2011 only further “proved” that the West was actively looking to undermine Russia and led to Vladimir Putin stating that “[opposition leaders] heard the signal and with the support of the U.S. state department began active work.”<sup>6</sup> He then said that “[w]e all understand the organisers are acting according to a well-known scenario and in their own mercenary political interests.”<sup>7</sup> After the additional events of the Arab Spring and the political turmoil in Ukraine in 2014, Putin said that “[i]n the modern world extremism is being used as a geopolitical instrument and for remaking spheres of influence. We see what tragic consequences the wave of so-called color revolutions led to...For us this is a lesson and a warning. We should do everything necessary so that nothing similar ever happens in Russia.”<sup>8</sup>

## **B. A MILITARY EMPHASIS ON THE NEW THREAT**

The threat of a color revolution in Russia was not simply perceived by civilian political leaders. In 2011, General Nikolai Makarov, then the Russian Chief of the General Staff, believed that some countries were using a combination of methods to get rid of unfriendly foreign governments, and he believed that this could be a threat to Russia and its allies.<sup>9</sup> Fifteen months later, General Makarov’s successor, General Valeriy Gerasimov, solidified the concept of this threat in an article in *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kur’er* (Military-Industrial Courier).<sup>10</sup> In his article, General Gerasimov said that the events of the Arab Spring “confirm that a completely prosperous state can, in a matter of months and even days, be transformed into an arena of fierce armed conflict,

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<sup>6</sup> Miriam Elder, “Vladimir Putin Accuses Hillary Clinton of Encouraging Russian Protests,” *The Guardian*, December 8, 2011, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/08/vladimir-putin-hillary-clinton-russia>.

<sup>7</sup> Elder.

<sup>8</sup> Darya Korsunskaya, “Putin Says Russia Must Prevent ‘Color Revolution,’” Reuters, November 20, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>.

<sup>9</sup> Ivan Safronov, “Genshtab gotovitsya k voyne” [General Staff Readies Itself for War], *Gazeta Kommersant*, November 18, 2011, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1818296/>.

<sup>10</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, “Tsennost’ nauki v predvidenii: Novye vyzovy trebuyut perecmysl’ formy i sposoby vedeniya boevykh deystviy” [The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Require Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Conducting Military Operations], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kur’er*, February 27, 2013, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

fall prey to foreign intervention, and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, and civil war.”<sup>11</sup> General Gerasimov goes on to discuss how non-military means have become more important than military ones in obtaining a state’s political objectives, and that the United States, in his opinion, had become very good at integrating these military and non-military means in order to quickly develop conditions that have been favorable to the United States and decrease any military advantages the target country may have. In effect, General Gerasimov is implying that the West, and the United States in particular, created the color revolution threat.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MOD) showcased its perception of the threat when it decided to use the 2014 Moscow Conference on International Security to focus on the threat of and response to color revolutions.<sup>12</sup> During his opening remarks, Sergei Shoygu, Russia’s Minister of Defense, declared color revolutions to be “a major factor in the destabilization of the situation in many regions of the world,” and that while the methods used in each color revolution are slightly different, they each follow the general pattern of “information action — military pressure — a change of political leadership and an alteration of the state’s foreign-policy and economic thrust.”<sup>13</sup> Following Shoygu, Sergei Lavrov discussed the destructive results that occur when Western countries unilaterally violate the sovereignty of others under the guise of promoting democracy and preventing humanitarian crises; General Gerasimov then described the threat as he had laid it out in his article the previous year, elaborating upon specific examples; and next the Belarussian Minister of Defense, Lieutenant-General Yuri Zhadobin, discussed the regional impacts of color revolutions and the need for regional organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to combat them.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov.

<sup>12</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, “Conference Proceedings,”(III Moscow Conference on International Security, Moscow: Russian Ministry of Defense, 2017, [http://eng.mil.ru/files/MCIS\\_report\\_catalogue\\_final\\_ENG\\_21\\_10\\_preview.pdf](http://eng.mil.ru/files/MCIS_report_catalogue_final_ENG_21_10_preview.pdf); Anthony H. Cordesman, “Russia and the ‘Color Revolution’: A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the U.S. and the West.”

<sup>13</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, “Conference Proceedings,” 10.

<sup>14</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, 12–25.

Taken together, these speakers and those who followed showed the level of importance Russia puts on this perceived threat. It is not a perception that should be ignored and dismissed as unimportant to understanding the motivations of Russian actions. One of the conference attendees, Anthony Cordesman, the Arleigh A. Burke Chair for Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said of the conference that “[w]hat is critical is that the U.S. and Europe listen to what Russian military leaders and strategists are saying. These are not Russian views the U.S. and Europe can afford to ignore.”<sup>15</sup>

### C. THE IDEA OF A COORDINATED RUSSIAN “STRATEGY”

As Edward Meade Earle described it, “[s]trategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation...including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed.”<sup>16</sup> While this thesis will use the word “strategy” in its effort to describe Russia’s reaction to a perceived threat, it must be cautioned that this is not necessarily meant to imply that each part of Russia’s reaction to the color revolutions is part of an overarching strategy being planned in a coordinated manner with a singular purpose in mind. Just as Russia mistakenly sees an overarching Western plan where democracy assistance is carefully combined with economic pressure and military might in order to purposefully carry out coups against anti-Western governments, spectators to Russia’s response should not return the favor by assuming Russia acts with unitary focus. President Putin may provide guidance and direction for Russia, but it takes thousands of bureaucrats and military officers to make this happen, each with their own idea of how things should be done and what the priorities for their respective ministry or agency should be.

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<sup>15</sup> Cordesman, “Russia and the ‘Color Revolution’: A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the U.S. and the West,” 3.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Meade Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943), viii.

There is no reason to think that Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, is acting according to a rational actor model.<sup>17</sup> The ill fit of the rational actor model for the Soviet Union was one of the conclusions that Andrew Marshall and Joseph Loftus reached during their work on Project SOVOY, an internal RAND project that sought to improve the organization's ability to predict innovation in the Soviet Union's nuclear forces. They found that the idea of predicting Soviet behavior as if its actions were controlled by a single entity was a "mirage," that its actions could better be analyzed as the result of decisions taken by a limited number of people inside a large bureaucracy, and that continuing to use the rational actor model to describe Soviet decision-making was potentially dangerous.<sup>18</sup> The problems with the rational actor model have been examined by Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, who discussed the use of organizational behavior and governmental politics models to better analyze the Soviet Union's decision-making processes.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Morton Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter looked at how organizations' interests and their desire for increased influence in policy decision making and execution can alter government decisions, further degrading the idea of a single rational actor in the determination of policy decisions.<sup>20</sup>

#### **D. THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUR ADVERSARY**

Many in the United States would argue that the color revolution threat as the Russians perceive it is not a strategy at all, but simply an example of what Peter Layton describes as opportunism, and that the United States is simply reacting to the environment abroad, changing and evolving its political and military approach according

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<sup>17</sup> The rational actor model is a model used to understand governmental decision-making that assumes that actions are taken purposefully, that national governments can be analyzed as a singular actor, and that each action taken is carefully selected to address a strategic problem. To argue against the use of the rational actor model in the analysis of decision-making is to say that the above assumptions are not all correct, and this does not imply that a government or actor is acting irrationally. From Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, *The Last Warrior: Andrew Marshall and the Shaping of Modern American Defense Strategy*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 45–46.

<sup>19</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*.

<sup>20</sup> Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 25–61.

to a general principle of supporting democracy.<sup>21</sup> As a response to the perceived Western strategy of using color revolutions, the Russian strategy may be a form of risk management as Layton would describe it, where Russia seeks to build the capabilities to protect itself and its allies from the shock of political protests and regime change.<sup>22</sup> This back and forth action and reaction between the U.S. / NATO and Russia in a contest for influence over many of the former communist countries is creating a spiral-like situation leading to increasing tension between the two sides and a mistrust of the others' intentions.<sup>23</sup> It also seems to fit Shiping Tang's definition of a security dilemma.

Shiping Tang defines a security dilemma as a situation where two states act defensively toward one another, and because they cannot be certain of the other's intent, seek to accumulate more power and influence in order to defend themselves. However, because defensive measures can likely also be used in the offensive, they may be perceived as threatening by other side, resulting in each side seeking to take countermeasures against the other's defensive measures. These measures and countermeasures, fears and uncertainties, therefore become reinforcing.<sup>24</sup> Fully understanding the actions and reactions of one's competitor is likely key to preventing further escalation.

In concluding his 2013 article on modern conflict, General Gerasimov said that no matter what new tactics an enemy may use, and no matter how proficient his forces may be, there is always a counter to his strategy. He says that every force has its vulnerabilities and that there exist the means of frustrating its efforts.<sup>25</sup> This was likely meant as a call to Russian military leaders to find vulnerabilities in the color revolution strategy and to find ways of exploiting them so as to protect Russia and its autocratic

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Layton, "The Idea of Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 4 (August 2012): 59.

<sup>22</sup> Layton, 60.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 62–67.

<sup>24</sup> Shiping Tang, "The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis," *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 594.

<sup>25</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii: Novye vyzovy trebuyut perecmysl' formy i sposoby vedeniya boevykh deystviy" [The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Require Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Conducting Military Operations]."

allies. It may also have been a call to learn from what the United States had done in order to use these non-military methods as offensive tools to expand Russian influence and undermine its Western competitors.

While Russia's offensive efforts receive the majority of the attention and research, its defensive efforts are important as well if the United States wants to continue to promote more liberal democracies and pro-Western regimes, especially in former communist states. This understanding of Russia's defensive reaction needs to include not only *how* the Russian security forces are adapting but also *why* they are adapting in those ways. The Russians are developing new methods to push back against this wave of democratization both at home and abroad, some of which were seen in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine in 2010.<sup>26</sup> It is critical for the United States and the West to understand these methods if they wish to continue to adapt and attempt to stay ahead of the Russians in this strategic evolution.

Some of this work has already been accomplished. Gerasimov's views of the changing nature of war have been thoroughly analyzed.<sup>27</sup> Others have discussed the importance of Gerasimov's ideas regarding whether or not this constitutes a new doctrine or method of war for Russia.<sup>28</sup> These more generic articles have been followed up with countless articles specifically discussing Russia's actions in this regard in Ukraine and Syria. However, much of this work focuses on Russia's offensive capabilities, i.e., its ability to usurp this Western doctrine for its own means, and less has been written on

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<sup>26</sup> Philip P. Pan, "Russia Is Said to Have Fueled Unrest in Kyrgyzstan," *Washington Post*, April 12, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/11/AR2010041103827.html>; Taras Kuzio, "Russia Backs Yanukovich in Ukraine's 2010 Elections," Jamestown Foundation, January 29, 2010, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-backs-yanukovich-in-ukraines-2010-elections/>.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear War," *In Moscow's Shadows* (blog), July 6, 2014, <https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>; Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (2016): 30–38.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Kofman, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts," *War on the Rocks*, March 11, 2016, <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts/>; Roger N. McDermott, "Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?," *Parameters* 46, no. 1 (2016): 97; Ruslan Pukhov, "Mif o 'gibridnoy voyne'" [The Myth of Hybrid War], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, May 25, 2015, [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-05-29/1\\_war.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-05-29/1_war.html); Charles K. Bartles, "Russia's Indirect and Asymmetric Methods as a Response to the New Western Way of War," *Special Operations Journal* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1–11.

Russia's reaction to this new "Western way of war" in order to protect the status quo and Russian interests in its near abroad.

## **E. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This thesis examines the Russian security forces' adaptation to a changing security environment. More specifically, it examines how the Russians are reacting to defend against the threat environment that General Gerasimov has identified. It does so by utilizing questions proposed in "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," which looks at the issue of military effectiveness by asking questions related to the generation of military power at the political, strategic, operational, and tactical levels.<sup>29</sup> This thesis examines the strategic level, defined as the use of military or forceful means to achieve national goals as they are defined by the state's political leaders,<sup>30</sup> and the operational level, which is the planning and development of methods and supporting doctrine to enable the employment of security forces in order to achieve a state's strategic objectives.<sup>31</sup>

One section for each of four aspects is used to examine Russia's defensive reaction to the color revolutions. Each section addresses why that specific question is relevant to this discussion and its importance in defending against the color revolution threat, lays out the steps Russia has taken to respond to the corresponding element of the threat, and evaluates how successful that response has been. These four aspects were chosen in order to thoroughly cover the breadth of any reaction, or lack of reaction, to the threat and to best answer the question of how Russia has innovated in response to the color revolutions.

The first section discusses the Russian military's understanding of the threat, examining what elements make up a color revolution and what are the possible defenses needed in response. The second section discusses the major steps that Russia's security

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<sup>29</sup> Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security* 11, no. 1 (1986): 37–71.

<sup>30</sup> Millett, Murray, and Watman, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Millett, Murray, and Watman, 50.



forces have taken to more adequately respond to the threat and coordinate the government's efforts. The third section discusses the steps taken by the Russian government to support its security forces in defending against the political opposition and mass protests that generally represent the culmination of a color revolution. A fourth section addresses Russian efforts to establish a forward line of defense against color revolutions by supporting its autocratic allies in the region.

Taken together, these sections show how Russia has developed a reasonable understanding of the threat, but it is an understanding that overestimates the intent of the U.S. government to conduct regime changes and the role of Western democratization efforts in color revolution successes. These sections also show how Russia is working to insulate itself from the Western influences that helped to set the conditions for the color revolution successes. However, the Kremlin continues to place a higher emphasis on the threat than does the Russian MOD, which is evident in the more robust reaction to the color revolutions that is seen coming from the Kremlin.

Lastly, this thesis addresses what implications this research has for the United States and NATO strategy in Europe and what additional questions need to be answered concerning Russia's response to the color revolutions. While understanding Russia's offensive reaction to the Western "strategy" of conducting color revolutions is certainly important, its defensive reaction has something to tell us as well.

## II. UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

In 1974, Soviet General V.K. Konoplev said that the driving force and motivation for foresight are practical application and experience, where foresight is the ability to understand possible innovations in military affairs and the determination of how such innovations can be used in conflict.<sup>32</sup> It is also a skill that General Gerasimov, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, apparently finds lacking in Russia's military science community. In a 2016 article, General Gerasimov criticized his peers for having lost the ability to recognize and rigorously study contemporary military problems as they emerge, and the following year, he once again called for the Academy of Military Sciences to participate in the discussion concerning the changing nature of war, in which conflicts develop at a more rapid pace and that predominantly use non-military means.<sup>33</sup> This call for improved foresight in modern conflict may be due to the perception that Russia's military has been intellectually behind in the color revolution "arms race." While General Gerasimov described the perceived color revolution threat in 2013, it has been developing since the mid-1990s. The early stages were seen in Romania and Bulgaria in 1996 and 1997, respectively. Its successful elements coalesced into a somewhat organized strategy in Slovakia in 1998 and in Croatia in early 2000. Then, the mass protests in Serbia after the presidential election in 2000 represented the culmination of the electoral strategy's evolution as a method for conducting a color revolution.<sup>34</sup> The

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<sup>32</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "The Methodology of Foresight and Forecasting in Soviet Military Affairs" (Ft. Leavenworth: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center Soviet Army Studies Office, 1987), 10, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA196677>.

<sup>33</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, March 9, 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Mir na granyakh voyny" [The World on the Edge of War], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, March 15, 2017, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/35591>.

<sup>34</sup> The electoral strategy is one that combines the efforts of foreign support, domestic civil society, youth movements, and a unified political opposition to increase voter turn-out, expose electoral fraud, and if necessary, non-violently protest against "stolen" elections in order to remove an incumbent government from power. From Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*.

Russian government has responded to the threat with some non-military means, but the military largely remained silent on the topic until the efforts of General Gerasimov.<sup>35</sup>

There are multiple reasons that can explain why Russian military scholars were delayed in their response to color revolutions. It could be because the threat was not taken seriously until the Arab Spring and the electoral protests in Moscow, both of which were ongoing in the winter of 2011–2012, bringing the perception of the threat back into the forefront of people’s minds. It could simply be because of the change of leadership at the MOD from Serdyukov and Makarov to Shoygu and Gerasimov. Also, it could have been because President Putin finally put enough pressure on the military to address a threat that could personally target his ability to retain power. Additionally, the response may have been delayed because it is not easy for any large military organization to change its thinking, and the delayed response could be a result of organizational inertia and a Russian military culture that has created friction against responding to such a non-traditional threat.

This chapter examines how Russians perceive the color revolution threat. It does so by first examining two sources of resistance to change that all large military organizations face: organizational resistance and cultural resistance. It then looks at the Russian understanding of the threat by first examining the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and then examining the discussion of the color revolution threat that has been published in Russian military journals, amongst other sources. Next, it looks at some of the suggested defenses and proposed changes needed to protect Russia from the color revolution threat, and finally, it looks at what Russia’s understanding of the threat means for its likelihood to respond appropriately.

## **A. SOURCES OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

Although it may take some time, militaries do tend to innovate when faced with new threats and in response to their own past failures, and they also tend to innovate in

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<sup>35</sup> Katherine T. Hinkle, “Russia’s Reactions to the Color Revolutions” (Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), [https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/52991/17Mar\\_Hinkle\\_Katherine.pdf?sequence=1](https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/52991/17Mar_Hinkle_Katherine.pdf?sequence=1).

response to the experiences of their client states as well.<sup>36</sup> For Russia, these experiences include not only the failures of regimes in Serbia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, but also the successes of regimes in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Syria. These case studies give the Russian military the opportunity to learn not only from their allies' experiences, but their own as well.

However, the color revolution threat alone may not be enough to encourage military innovation. Successful innovation likely requires not only the imagination and vision of senior leaders, but also a supportive organizational and military culture.<sup>37</sup> General Gerasimov appears to be providing the vision and emphasis for this effort from the senior leadership, but military organizational and cultural resistance to any changes are common obstacles preventing innovation from the status quo, and are sources of resistance that will need to be overcome if Russia is to protect against the perceived threat of a color revolution.<sup>38</sup>

## **1. Organizational Resistance to Change**

Organizational resistance to change, perhaps better described as a bureaucratic resistance to change, is something all large militaries must struggle against in order to innovate in response to changing threats and conditions, and there is no reason to think that the large bureaucracy in the MOD would be any different. Bureaucracies work to create order out of a constantly changing world and will act as a brake against changes that upset the current status quo.<sup>39</sup>

Because of the large size of the MOD and the large bureaucracy that it takes to run the ministry, it should not be surprising that Russia's military has taken so long and

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<sup>36</sup> Janine Davidson, "Military Learning and Competing Theories of Change," in *Lifting the Fog of Peace: How Americans Learned to Fight Modern War* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 10; Kimberly Marten Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955–1991* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 178.

<sup>37</sup> Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Davidson, "Military Learning and Competing Theories of Change," 11.

<sup>39</sup> Williamson Murray, "Military Adaptation in War" (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, June 2009), 20, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA509781>.

perhaps been resistant to any substantial changes that might help it confront a non-traditional threat. In general, leaders and the bureaucracies that support them see an inherent risk in any innovation, and their “organizations abhor uncertainty, and changes in traditional patterns always involve uncertainty.”<sup>40</sup> Innovations will be unproven and may come at the expense of methods and force structures that have proven themselves to be successful in the past. These proven methods and force structures, and the decisions that leaders made in the past that led to success, continue to be reinforced, influencing the type of war that a nation will be prepared to fight next. Even when leaders are presented with evidence that future wars will not be as anticipated, they will be hesitant to deviate from the path already established.<sup>41</sup>

Risk averse senior officers, who generally wish to simply maintain the status quo, are reluctant to contemplate and prepare to fight in ways for which their own education and experience have not prepared them. These leaders, who attained their rank under the current system by mastering the current doctrine against largely traditionally-defined threats, are understandably hesitant to create a new doctrine based on a new threat and thereby make their own experience and knowledge less relevant.<sup>42</sup> General Gerasimov appears willing to push for the changes necessary to fight in modern conflicts. This includes embracing non-traditional methods of conflict and non-military forms of power, and while some senior leaders are resistant to change, others attempt to walk the line between the reformists and traditionalists.<sup>43</sup>

However, Russia’s military culture may be the sticking point that prevents true change. While organizational resistance works as a brake against any quick changes to the status quo, military culture resists changes from the traditional character of a military and those that take the organization away from the force structures and lessons learned

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<sup>40</sup> Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 3rd ed., Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 224.

<sup>41</sup> Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 224.

<sup>43</sup> Makhmut Gareyev, “Vyzov prinyat” [Challenge Accepted], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur’er*, December 24, 2016, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/29347>; Makhmut Gareyev, “Posledovatel’no otstaivat’ natsional’nye interesy” [Consistently Defending National Interests], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur’er*, January 22, 2014, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/18828>.

from the last “good” war.<sup>44</sup> If the innovations needed to counter the color revolution threat deviate from the military’s traditional role and the image of the last “good” war, which in Russia is World War II, they are more likely to be rejected.

## **2. Cultural Resistance to Change**

Military culture is the “set of beliefs, attitudes, and values within the military establishment that shape collective (shared) preferences of how and when military means should be used to accomplish strategic aim.”<sup>45</sup> As Lieutenant General Stroup put it, “the Army’s culture is its personality. It reflects the Army’s values, philosophy, norms and unwritten rules...[which] guide behavior and the way the Army processes information as an organization.”<sup>46</sup> It stands to reason that Russia’s military culture will impact the way in which its senior theorists think about the color revolution threat and how to respond, especially since defeating this threat is not and should not be a core mission of Russia’s military. However, as a peripheral mission, even if emphasized by senior leaders, it stands the chance of being politely ignored if it deviates from Russian military culture or detracts from what is seen as the military’s core mission.<sup>47</sup>

Russia’s military culture, like all others, is a legacy of its past, and it is not one that lends itself to countering the color revolution threat. Military cultures are rooted in military successes, and militaries tend to hold onto what worked in the past and reject what has not.<sup>48</sup> For Russia, its greatest historic success was World War II, or as the Russians call it, the Great Patriotic War. The perception that World War II was perhaps Russia’s last good war helps to explain why Russia continues to prioritize massive numbers of tanks and artillery and still emphasizes a mobilization military. It is also an explanatory factor for why Russia’s defeat in Afghanistan and its struggles in Chechnya

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<sup>44</sup> Davidson, “Military Learning and Competing Theories of Change,” 13.

<sup>45</sup> Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 40.

<sup>46</sup> Theodore G. Stroup, “Leadership and Organizational Culture: Actions Speak Louder than Words,” *Military Review* 76 (1996): 45.

<sup>47</sup> Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> Cassidy, 40.

against asymmetric threats, both of which might be deemed “bad” wars, never led to Russia developing a significant light infantry capability, which would be more useful than armored forces in future conflicts of a similar nature.<sup>49</sup> Russia’s military culture is one that embraces the idea of quantity over quality, and it is one that has a relatively high tolerance for human casualties.<sup>50</sup> However, a large armored force that isn’t especially concerned with reducing the possible number of casualties is one that is not best suited for countering the color revolution threat.

In the United States, it took the pressing demand of fighting counterinsurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan to briefly break from a Cold War mentality of conventionally-defined war based upon the use of army divisions as the standard fighting unit to one that prioritized the use of self-sufficient brigade combat teams and special operations forces with an emphasis on fighting asymmetric and irregular threats. However, with those wars largely over, the United States military’s cultural attraction to fighting the force-on-force symmetric fight is returning.

This cultural pull is something with which the Russian military must also contend. Russia’s military culture affects how they think about the threat, and it could restrict what the military sees as acceptable reactions to the threat. While this cultural aversion to non-traditional war may have helped to delay an intellectual response from Russian military thinkers, it has not ultimately stopped that response all together.

## **B. THE COLOR REVOLUTION DISCUSSION THUS, FAR**

The color revolution discussion was not completely absent from public discourse in Russia prior to 2013. The color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan could hardly be ignored, but the emphasis of it as a threat to Russia did seem to be missing. The re-emphasis of the threat after 2012, however, led to a large amount of writing on the topic in military journals and newspapers, and the color revolution threat played a large part in the 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

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<sup>49</sup> Cassidy, 49.

<sup>50</sup> Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel*. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 44.

## **1. Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation**

In December 2014, President Putin signed the most recent Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.<sup>51</sup> This document, while referred to as a “military doctrine,” is more akin to a national military strategy. The 2014 doctrine includes a section on the nature and characteristics of modern warfare, lists the main dangers and threats that Russia faces, and also lists some of the tasks that Russia must accomplish in order to prevent and contain armed conflict.

The 2014 doctrine’s discussion on the characteristics of modern warfare reads like a summary of what General Gerasimov has discussed at length. Pertinent to this discussion, several of these elements seem to specifically refer to the color revolution threat. The elements mentioned include the use of non-military means combined with the protest potential of the local population, the use of irregular military forces and private military companies, and the use of externally funded and organized political groups and social movements. These elements are essentially what Russia accuses the West of doing in order to create color revolutions.<sup>52</sup>

The perceived threat of a Russian color revolution is not just affecting how Russians perceive modern warfare, but has also caused them to re-evaluate directions from which threats might come. While internal dangers have been considered in the past, the 2014 doctrine greatly expanded upon the concept of domestic military dangers. These internal dangers include organizations and people who act to undermine Russia’s sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, or those activities that create ethnic and social tension: a description that can easily be applied to any group of economic or political protesters. Additionally, the doctrine sees as a danger the use of information to influence the Russian people, especially its youth, to turn away from their traditional, spiritual, and patriotic feelings of support to defend the Fatherland. Lastly, the doctrine points to the danger of activities that aim to violently change Russia’s constitutional system and that

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<sup>51</sup> “Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii” [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation], December 26, 2014, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> “Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii” [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation], 7–8.



destabilize the country's political and social system.<sup>53</sup> Such a violent change to a constitutional system is essentially how Russians describe the Euromaidan protests in 2013 in Ukraine, calling them an anti-constitutional coup.

Even the external dangers described in the 2014 doctrine were not devoid of references to the non-traditional threats associated with a color revolution. Among these dangers are the use of information technology to undermine Russia's sovereignty and political stability, the overthrow of legitimate governments in states bordering Russia, and the subversive activities of foreign governments' intelligence services.<sup>54</sup> The combination of these internal and external dangers appears to paint the picture of a Kremlin that is even more paranoid about internal instability, social unrest, and the ability of the West to influence Russian society and political culture.

The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation provides one source of formal doctrine, but to have an impact upon military operations, both formal and informal doctrine are likely to be necessary, where informal doctrine includes journal articles and other unofficial publications, letters, correspondence, and speeches. These pieces of informal doctrine, published by Russian senior military leaders and strategists, are an important source of information and complement the perception of the color revolution threat found in Russia's 2014 military doctrine.

## **2. Russia's Informal Military Doctrine**

Even though discussions of color revolutions in Russian publications appeared before 2013, General Gerasimov largely began this discussion of color revolutions and the process of creating informal doctrine with respect to color revolutions in his 2013 article. He and others have published their thoughts as they relate to this threat in Russian military journals such as *Voenna-Promyshlenny Kur'er* (*Military-Industrial Courier*), *Voennaya Mysl* (*Military Thought*), and *Armeiskiy Sbornik* (*Army Collection*), amongst others, and this thesis primarily uses the work published in these sources in order to understand current Russian thinking on the topic. However, while some of these articles

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<sup>53</sup> "Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation], 6–7.

<sup>54</sup> "Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation], 5–6.

do discuss color revolutions and their constituent elements as a separate topic, they are frequently analyzed as one part of the overall Western way of war, an element of hybrid or new-generation warfare, or simply as an evolution and new phase of the Cold War. However, one defines the threat, whether it is or isn't a part of hybrid warfare, for example, is largely irrelevant to this discussion. What is important to the Russian understanding of color revolutions is what their constituent elements are and how Russia can better defend against them.

A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko's article, "The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions," is a good starting place in a search to understand the Russian view of this topic. Belsky and Klimenko cite previous work to understand the typology of color revolutions (if such a thing could actually exist) and point to Dr. Gene Sharp's *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* as the underlying practical guide to the color revolutions.<sup>55</sup> Dr. Sharp's work was in fact used by Western democracy promoters, especially in Serbia, and in Ukraine during the 2004 Orange Revolution, to educate those opposed to the incumbent government on non-violent methods of political opposition.<sup>56</sup>

Aleksandr Bartosh's piece, "Color Revolutions and the Hybrid Wars of the Present," while written from the viewpoint of a Russia consistently under attack from the West, does lay out rather accurately the progression of events during what are traditionally thought of as the color revolutions, the electoral revolutions of the early 2000s. It starts with the creation of an organized political opposition, and then uses a catalyst to encourage public outrage, which in the past has included things such as perceived electoral fraud, the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, or the violent overreaction of security forces against protesters.<sup>57</sup> Finally, massive political protests are

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<sup>55</sup> A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko, "Politicheskie tekhnologii 'tsvetnykh revolyutsiy': puti i protivodeystviya" [The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: The Ways and Means of Counteraction], *Voennaya Misl* 9 (2014): 20–29.

<sup>56</sup> Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*, 3rd U.S. ed. (East Boston, MA: Albert Einstein Institution, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Mohamed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor who lit himself on fire in protest after harassment by government officials and the confiscation of his street cart and wares. His self-immolation sparked the protests in Tunisia that then catalyzed the Arab Spring.

used to demand and gain political concessions from the government.<sup>58</sup> This description of the progression of events is similar to what General Gerasimov described in his article in 2013, although General Gerasimov's description describes a much more generalized conflict scenario.

When it comes to the specific elements and characteristics of a color revolution, Colonel Kalistratov's discussion in *Armeiskiy Sbornik* about the various types of modern war hits many of the key aspects. Among the aspects that are relevant to a color revolution are the pre-eminence of non-military means over military ones; a split among the country's political and military elites, which undermines the government's ability to maintain its aura of strength and influence, and subsequently, weakens its control over security forces; a long-term effort to change the populace's perception of the appropriate social contract between a country's government and its citizens; a long-term change to a country's basic principles and values; a decentralized and indirect link between the internal opposition and the external actors supporting them; and the use of an ideological cover, such as democratization and human rights, to justify external intervention.<sup>59</sup>

The elements mentioned by Bartosh and Kalistratov are frequently mentioned in other articles discussing color revolutions and modern warfare, but many other aspects that frequently, but not always, appear as a part of a color revolution are important to understand as well. As many note, opposition groups and non-governmental organizations involved in color revolutions frequently receive funding and training at least in part by foreign organizations and governments.<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, many authors note the role that young people and modern communication technologies play in color revolutions. This observation about young

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<sup>58</sup> Aleksandr Bartosh, "Tsvetnye revolyutsii i gibridnye voyny sovremennosti" [Modern Color Revolutions and Hybrid Wars], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, January 22, 2016, [http://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2016-01-22/1\\_revolutions.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2016-01-22/1_revolutions.html).

<sup>59</sup> A. Kalistratov, "Voyna i covremennost': Sovremennye voyny: razberemcya s klassifikatsiey" [War and Modernity: Modern War - Let's Sort out the Classification], *Armeiskiy Sbornik*, no. 7 (July 2017): 11.

<sup>60</sup> S.G. Chekinov and S.A. Bogdanov, "O kharaktere i coderzhanii voyny novogo pokoleniya" [The Nature and Content of New-Generation Warfare], *Voennaya Misl* 10 (2013): 13–24; A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko, "Politicheskie tekhnologii 'tsvetnykh revolyutsiy': puti i protivodeystviya" [The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: The Ways and Means of Counteraction], 25; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience]."

people should not be surprising, since young people are frequently among the voices demanding change in countries the world over, and youth organizations and young people in general did play a significant role in several of the color revolutions. This is especially the case in Serbia, where the student movement, Otpor, meaning resistance, was among the leading opposition groups.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, Pora, a Ukrainian youth group, played a large role in the Orange Revolution, especially in the organization of protests in Kiev.<sup>62</sup> The role of youth has not been overlooked in color revolution discussions, especially the perception that young people are being negatively influenced from abroad.<sup>63</sup>

Colonel Kalistratov claims that color revolutions were not successful until the advent of cellphones, the Internet, and mass media. This is not exactly true, since revolutions long before any of those things existed fit the definition of a color revolution. However, modern communication technologies have certainly made the diffusion of ideas and the spread of non-violent methods and tactics much easier, and they have decreased government's ability to control the flow of such ideas. These modern technologies, and the influence pushed by the West through them, are frequently cited as a reason for the change in culture, morals, and values of Russia's youth, which supposedly leads to lowered support for the government and the growth of activism and extremism.<sup>64</sup>

### **3. Color Revolution Defenses**

The non-violent nature of color revolutions and the non-military methods used to conduct them largely necessitate non-military defenses against them. Some of these non-

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<sup>61</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, 100–102.

<sup>62</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 127–38.

<sup>63</sup> A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko, "Politicheskie tekhnologii 'tsvetnykh revolyutsiy': puti i protivodeystviya" [The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: The Ways and Means of Counteraction], 25; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience]; Makhmut Gareyev, "Posledovatel'no otstaivat' natsional'nye interesy" [Consistently Defending National Interests]."

<sup>64</sup> A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko, "Politicheskie tekhnologii 'tsvetnykh revolyutsiy': puti i protivodeystviya" [The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: The Ways and Means of Counteraction], 25; Aleksandr Bartosh, "Tsvetnye revolyutsii i gibridnye voyny sovremennosti" [Modern Color Revolutions and Hybrid Wars]; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience]."

military defenses that those writing about the threat have identified include countering foreign media and information globalization, isolating opposition leaders and groups and cutting them off from any foreign financing and media support, and strengthening the patriotic values and will of Russia's youth to support the state against political oppositions.<sup>65</sup>

These defensive measures may not require military involvement, but others might, and some definitely do. Colonel Kalistratov, for example, called for the quick introduction of martial law, the use of wartime laws during an internal crisis, and the quick suppression of mass disorder and protests, all of which might require military involvement. However, if such a major crisis should break out that the military does need to get involved, government coordination of the response will be complicated.

General Gerasimov on several occasions has spoken about the need for a more well-defined understanding of each ministry's role in national defense and in the use of joint forces in a crisis.<sup>66</sup> This includes the need to develop a more defined method for employing and controlling military and non-military forces deployed within Russia during a crisis. While many believe that the military isn't needed to defend against such an internal crisis as a color revolution in Russia, and therefore, controlling them inside the country is irrelevant, General Gerasimov disagrees.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> A. Kalistratov, "Voyna i sovremennost': Sovremennyye voyny: razberemcya s klassifikatsiyey" [War and Modernity: Modern War - Let's Sort out the Classification]; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Organizatsiya oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii v usloviyakh primeneniya protivnikom 'traditsionnykh' i 'gibridnykh' metodov vedeniy voyny" [Organization of the Defense of the Russian Federation under the Conditions of the Enemy's Application of the "Traditional" and "Hybrid" Methods of War], *Vestnik Akademii Voennykh Nauk* 2, no. 55 (May 2016): 20; A.N. Belsky and O.V. Klimenko, "Politicheskie tekhnologii 'tsvetnykh revolyutsiy': puti i protivodeystviya" [The Political Engineering of Color Revolutions: The Ways and Means of Counteraction], 27; Makhmut Gareyev, "Na 'myagkuyu cily' naydutsya zhestkie otvety" [For 'Soft Power' Hard Answers will be Found], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, December 4, 2013, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/18404>; Aleksandr Bartosh, "Tsvetnye revolyutsii i gibridnye voyny sovremennosti" [Modern Color Revolutions and Hybrid Wars]."

<sup>66</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii: Novye vyzovy trebuyut pere Smyclit' formy i sposoby vedeniya boevykh deystviy" [The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Require Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Conducting Military Operations]; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Organizatsiya oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii v usloviyakh primeneniya protivnikom 'traditsionnykh' i 'gibridnykh' metodov vedeniy voyny" [Organization of the Defense of the Russian Federation under the Conditions of the Enemy's Application of the "Traditional" and "Hybrid" Methods of War], 21.

<sup>67</sup> Anton Marsadov, "'Tsvetnaya kontrevolyutsiya' poruchena Genshtaby" [A 'Color Counter-Revolution' is being Entrusted to the General Staff], *Svobodnaya Pressa*, June 24, 2015, <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/125858/>; Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience]."

General Makhmut Gareyev, the president of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, also noticed this capability gap as early as 2013 and began calling for a single command post to unify Russian military and non-military efforts.<sup>68</sup> He would also like to see the Russian Security Council become responsible for defending the country from non-military as well as military threats, and since color revolutions generally fall below the defined definition of war, he would like to see the Minister of Defense be given the rights of the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armed forces even in peacetime in order to better control these military forces.<sup>69</sup>

Recently, General Gerasimov has used the events in the Middle East as an example of the country's need to actively defend its interests abroad in order to help deter future color revolutions. In order to help deter color revolutions, says General Gerasimov, Russia needs allies and must maintain and even expand its international presence in regions where it has vital interests. This could mean creating new military bases abroad, but it also means strengthening Russia's ties with the countries of the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The diffusion of ideas and the spread of color revolutions, during the Arab Spring for example, does highlight why Russia needs a forward defense against the problem, something that General Gerasimov and others have apparently noticed.

### **C. A DELAYED RESPONSE TO COLOR REVOLUTIONS**

The rise of the color revolution phenomenon in the early 2000s should have been recognized by Russia's military leadership as a threat, and to some degree, it was. However, the Russian military never suffered a defeat or failure at the hands of a color revolution. Those defeats, such as in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, were suffered by Russia's allies, and this lack of a defeat may help to explain the Russian military's delayed response to the color revolution threat. Colonel General Leonid Ivashov said that, "[i]n Russia, unfortunately, no one has seriously studied this matter

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<sup>68</sup> Makhmut Gareyev, "Na 'myagkuyu cily' naydutsya zhestkie otvety" [For 'Soft Power' Hard Answers will be Found].

<sup>69</sup> Makhmut Gareyev, "Vyzov prinyat" [Challenge Accepted]; Makhmut Gareyev, "Posledovatel'no otstaivat' natsional'nye interesy" [Consistently Defending National Interests].

until recently, or commissioned any scientific research reports, or appointed a leading organization to be responsible for preventing such kinds of revolutions and wars.” Had such a study been conducted a decade ago, he said, the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine in 2014 may have ended differently.<sup>70</sup>

As General Gerasimov notes, the Russian military certainly should capture all the lessons possible from its experiences in Syria. However, when it comes to the color revolution threat, the Russians must prevent their military cultural bias from influencing how to interpret these lessons learned. Russia entered the conflict in Syria long after the non-violent protests had ended, and while many in Russia claim that the conflict fits their definition of a color revolution, by the time Russia got involved militarily, the conflict had become a civil war. Most of the lessons Russia will learn are those of a modern, conventional war: air-ground integration, the use of cruise missiles, operational logistics, urban combat, etc. Using these lessons as an example of how to combat the color revolution threat may fit nicely within Russia’s existing military capabilities and military culture, but they would not serve to help the Russian military against massive political protests and other non-military and non-violent means of opposition.

The obstacles to innovation make it seem more likely for the Russian military to make the threat response fit its existing capabilities than modify its capabilities to meet the threat. However, in the unlikely event that such a conflict should take place in Belarus, for example, Russia’s tactics in Syria and the lessons it learns may not be appropriate. Mass political protests in Belarus cannot be solved by Russian jets dropping bombs and Russian tanks rolling down the streets of Minsk, and when the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

Even if the Russian military learns the right lessons, it may get in its own way and obstruct any necessary reforms required by its newly acquired knowledge. While Russia, and the Soviet Union before it, has historically focused on foresight, recognizing the changes to war, and coming up with new ideas, it is not very good at implementing those

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<sup>70</sup> Anton Marsadov, “‘Tsvetnaya kontrevolyutsiya’ poruchena Genshtaby” [A ‘Color Counter-Revolution’ is being Entrusted to the General Staff].

ideas.<sup>71</sup> The Russians are generally the first to recognize changes to military conflict, and in the past, have been very good about developing new military concepts, something that Dima Adamsky feels should be considered as a part of Russia's strategic military culture. However, "[t]he bearers of Russian-Soviet strategic culture were traditionally good at theorizing about innovative concepts but pathologically bad at executing them."<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the organizational and cultural obstacles to Russian military innovation, there is also the question of how much of a threat color revolutions really present to Russia in the eyes of the military. General Gareyev generally agrees that subversion and color revolutions are a threat to Russia, but he says they are lesser threats, and that updating Russia's nuclear arsenal and maintaining its large tank and artillery-based formations must remain as the top priorities to defend Russia.<sup>73</sup> To him, the color revolution threat is better addressed by countering the West's distortion of Russia's values and standards, unifying the Russian people, creating a strong bond between the "patriotic youth" and the army, and encouraging a society that strongly supports the idea of defending the Fatherland.<sup>74</sup> The color revolution threat alone is likely not serious enough to warrant large-scale innovation in the military, and the peripheral focus that it receives in comparison to traditional threats is likely warranted, meaning responding to the color revolution threat will remain of secondary importance. This could be a problem since the military has historically been called upon to help deal with protesters, and because some in the Kremlin, who may feel that their control on power is the target of any color revolution, believe the threat to be much greater. This mismatch of priorities is likely one cause for the difference in responses between the military and the internal security forces, as the next chapter will discuss.

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<sup>71</sup> Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 52.

<sup>72</sup> Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 57.

<sup>73</sup> Makhmut Gareyev, "Posledovatel'no otstaivat' natsional'nye interesy" [Consistently Defending National Interests]; Dmitri Rogozin, Andrei Zabrodski, and Makhmut Gareyev, "Strategicheskie tseli natsional'noy bezopasnosti" [Strategic National Security Objectives], *Voenna-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, April 4, 2013, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/15222>.

<sup>74</sup> Makhmut Gareyev, "Posledovatel'no otstaivat' natsional'nye interesy" [Consistently Defending National Interests]; Makhmut Gareyev, "Na 'myagkuyu cily' naydutsya zhestkie otvety" [For 'Soft Power' Hard Answers will be Found].



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### III. REACTION TO COLOR REVOLUTIONS

Authoritarian regimes must walk a careful line in the suppression of the opposition. As an opposition grows, regimes may be tempted to use more coercive and violent actions to end such growth. However, while letting an opposition movement grow presents risks to the incumbent regime's survival, any use of violence on the part of the regime comes with risks of its own. While incumbent regimes may deem small amounts of violence as necessary in order to maintain its control of power, outright violent repression tends to undercut support for the regime, as seen in Slovakia in 1998, Serbia in 2000, and Ukraine in 2004.<sup>75</sup> In Serbia, this repression was interpreted as desperation on the part of the regime, which emboldened the opposition, and in Ukraine, the public deemed the regime's murder and poisoning of a journalist and an opposition leader as a step too far in its escalation of violent repression.<sup>76</sup>

On the pathway to regime survival, the state's security forces can go too far to protect the regime, but they can also not go far enough. While there are numerous factors, both domestic and international, that lead to the downfall of an autocratic regime, in the end, authoritarian leaders are defeated by color revolutions due to a failure of their security services.<sup>77</sup> In Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine (in 2004), Tunisia, and Egypt, the police and/or army refused to act in defense of the incumbent, and in Ukraine (in 2014) and Libya, they lacked the ability to do so. The need to temper the amount of violence used when dealing with "peaceful" protesters in order to not inspire greater opposition, but at the same time have the will and ability to act in the regime's defense, calls for a professional and well-trained security force that is loyal to the current national leadership.

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<sup>75</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, 99.

<sup>76</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 119.

<sup>77</sup> Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18–21.

This is a problem with which Russia is very familiar and that helped to bring about the downfall of the previous two regimes. In February 1917, largely economic grievances stemming from the ongoing losing war and food shortages led to massive protests in Petrograd. However, when an army regiment attempted to disperse the crowds, it ended up killing many of the protesters and sparking outrage among the populace. As a result, half of the city's 160,000-man garrison mutinied, with the other half remaining neutral in the conflict between the government and populace, and the military and police commands in the city were unable to stop the violence.<sup>78</sup> The inability of the authorities in Petrograd to regain control ultimately led to the end of Russia's tsarist regime.

The death of the Soviet Union likewise saw a combination of the unwillingness to act and a violent overreaction to growing opposition and nationalist movements. For example, the Kremlin's willingness to back down and accede the demands of protesters in Kazakhstan in 1986 boosted other nationalist movements in the Soviet Union.<sup>79</sup> Two years later, an inability to prevent clashes between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis and the resulting protests again showed Soviet weakness.<sup>80</sup>

These failures to act were followed by overreactions on the part of the Soviet Union's security forces. In April 1989, the military killed 21 people and wounded 200 in its attempt to end protests in Tbilisi. The following January, 131 people were reportedly killed and another 744 were wounded when Soviet troops moved to retake Baku from nationalistic protesters. Then, 14 people were killed and 580 were wounded in attempts to suppress protests in Vilnius in January 1991.<sup>81</sup>

The security forces' final two failures ultimately led to the end of the Communist regime. In March 1991, the Communists attempted to impeach Yeltsin, but Yeltsin escaped impeachment with the help of several hundred thousand protesters in

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<sup>78</sup> Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 76–79.

<sup>79</sup> Martin Edward Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 441.

<sup>80</sup> Malia, 441–42.

<sup>81</sup> John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11.

Moscow. These Muscovites protested even in the face of Gorbachev's ban on protests and the threat of force from fifty thousand soldiers.<sup>82</sup> Lastly, in August 1991, the refusal of the army and KGB to follow government orders during the attempted coup showed that "the Right had no force, and so permitted the Left to rush forward in revolutionary fashion to destroy the old order."<sup>83</sup> The current government in Moscow must feel pressure to ensure its security forces do not fail like they have in the past, and is likely nervous about the possibility of large opposition protests associated with the upcoming 2018 presidential election, not to mention what may occur in 2024 when President Putin will again be unable to run for election without a change to the constitution.<sup>84</sup>

This section discusses the two most significant steps undertaken by Russia's security forces in recent years to combat the threat of a color revolution. The first is the creation of the Russian National Guard in 2016, which consolidated all of the forces needed to combat internal instability and disorder into one government entity. The second is the military's creation of the National Defense Management Center (NDMC), which helps to improve inter-ministry cooperation and link Russia's internal and external forces for use both within Russia and abroad. While both are significant, these two steps highlight the difference in priority given to the color revolution threat, because while the creation of the National Guard seems mainly to be a response to the color revolution threat, the NDMC is likely a response more closely related to the quicker pace of modern conflict and the need for inter-ministry cooperation abroad, as General Gerasimov has so frequently discussed.

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<sup>82</sup> Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, 482.

<sup>83</sup> Malia, 485.

<sup>84</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol: Russia's Political-Military Reality* (Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2017), 39, <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266>; Margarete Klein, "Putin's New National Guard: Bulwark Against Mass Protests and Illoyal Elites," *Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik Comments*, 2016, 3, <http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/48314>.

## **A. THE ROSGVARDIYA: CREATING A MORE RELIABLE COERCIVE FORCE**

It is not surprising that many in the military community believe that Russia's true threats lay outside its borders, but General Yuri Baluyevsky, the former chief of Russia's General Staff, disagrees. He believes that Russia cannot be defeated from outside, but only from inside, and that Russia must be prepared to defend itself from these internal threats.<sup>85</sup> One of the more recent and most consequential steps taken to combat the problems of the past and to address internal threats to Russia is the creation of Russia's National Guard, the Rosgvardiya, which is estimated to have somewhere between 340 and 400 thousand personnel.<sup>86</sup> President Putin officially created the organization on July 3, 2016 when he signed the law "On the National Guard Forces of the Russian Federation."<sup>87</sup>

Russia's National Guard has assumed a large amount of the security responsibilities inside Russia, and is now tasked to enforce order during emergency situations, combat terrorism and extremism, protect Russia's territorial integrity, protect specially designated sites and infrastructure, enforce domestic arms control, escort special cargo, and work with the police to safeguard public order, which would include controlling and / or dispersing mass protests.<sup>88</sup> These responsibilities include the authority to detain people for several hours, which will be useful when breaking up protests. General Baluyevsky, who now advises the National Guard's commander, said that these "activities are aimed at protecting citizens, protecting public order and public security, ultimately—avoiding a color revolution."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Yuri Baluyevsky, "Voyna ne konchaetsya, ona - zamiraet" [War does not end - it Freezes], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, May 26, 2017, [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2017-05-26/1\\_949\\_rosgvardia.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2017-05-26/1_949_rosgvardia.html).

<sup>86</sup> Margarete Klein, "Putin's New National Guard: Bulwark Against Mass Protests and Illoyal Elites," 1; Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol* 20.

<sup>87</sup> Russian Federation, "Na voyskam natsional'noy gvardii Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [On the Troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation], *Ofitsial'nyy Internet-portal pravovoy informatsii*, July 3, 2016, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201607030007>.

<sup>88</sup> Vladimir Putin, "O voyskakh natsional'noy gvardii Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [On the National Guard Forces of the Russian Federation], Pub. L. No. 226-F3 (2016), 2–3, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201607030007>.

<sup>89</sup> Yuri Baluyevsky, "Voyna ne konchaetsya, ona - zamiraet" [War does not end - it Freezes].

While the National Guard will not have the investigative capabilities of the police, it will have an intelligence capability. An intelligence capability without investigative authority seems an unlikely combination for pursuing terrorists, but it will be useful in predicting when and where protests, rallies, and riots will take place and how large they may be.<sup>90</sup> Supporting this intelligence effort, the National Guard is building the capability to actively monitor social networks.<sup>91</sup> If the National Guard is better able to pre-empt large-scale gatherings, their job of controlling and / or dispersing such gatherings will be all the easier with less risk of bloodshed.

In its creation, the National Guard took a large amount of responsibility from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and it also took around 160,000 personnel from the organization. This number includes 5,200 personnel from the MVD's Special Rapid Response Team (SOBR) units along with OMON and its 40,000 personnel.<sup>92</sup> In addition to personnel and responsibilities formerly controlled by the MVD, the National Guard has replaced the Federal Drug Control Service and the Federal Migration Service, has gained control of the Okhrana, which manages security for select companies and individuals, and also now controls Chechnya's security service, the "Kadyrovtsy."<sup>93</sup>

The National Guard will primarily be used as a force inside Russia where it can be used by President Putin "as insurance against the development of a color revolution in Russia."<sup>94</sup> However, it can also be used outside of Russia in conjunction with the CSTO.<sup>95</sup> Its forces now include units that have already been a part of the CSTO's Collective Rapid Reaction Force in the past, and its new forces may have the training

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<sup>90</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Aleksei Nikolsky, "Rosgvardiya budet monitorit' sotsseti" [The Rosgvardia will Monitor Social Networks], *Vedomosti*, May 19, 2017, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2017/05/19/690668-rosgvardiya-budet-monitorit>.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> Margarete Klein, "Putin's New National Guard: Bulwark Against Mass Protests and Illoyal Elites," 1; Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Yulia Taratuta, "Aleksandr Hinshteyn: 'Rosgvardiya sozdana ne dlya togo, chtoby ogranichit FSB'" [Aleksandr Hinshteyn: 'Rosgvardiya was not created in order to limit the FSB'], *Republic*, November 18, 2016, <https://republic.ru/posts/76194>.

and experience to better handle issues of public disorder abroad as compared to the capabilities that the MOD can provide.<sup>96</sup>

The National Guard does appear to increase the capabilities of the Russian government to respond to mass protests in both Russia and abroad, and it also gives President Putin more direct control over that capability. The National Guard's commander, Colonel-General Viktor Zolotov, is a longtime associate of the president. He commanded the government's bodyguards from 2000–2013, and then became the First Deputy Minister of the Interior until his appointment to the National Guard. With the trusted Zolotov reporting directly to the president, this gives President Putin tight control of the forces necessary to respond to any internal threat to Russia and the continuation of the Putin regime, allowing Putin to safeguard himself from such threats.<sup>97</sup>

Recently, this chain of command has been strengthened when responding to internal threats. While government agencies are subordinated to the military when facing an external threat, as of May 2017, the military can now be placed under the command of the National Guard when facing an internal one.<sup>98</sup> Placing other ministries under the direction of the MOD is not unheard of in Russia, but making elements of the MOD subservient to another ministry is new. This only serves to strengthen President Putin's grip on the chain of command and may lower the chances of units not obeying orders when called upon to suppress mass protests during a crisis, emergency situation, or attempted color revolution.

The National Guard has wasted no time in the assumption of its duties. Quickly after its creation, the National Guard participated in joint exercises with the Russian airborne and Chinese police units, an effort to allow these elements to “figure out how

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 26.

<sup>97</sup> Aleksandr Goltz, “Rosgvardiya podminaet Genshtab” [The Rosgvardia Tramples on the General Staff], *The New Times*, June 5, 2017, <https://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/116432>.

<sup>98</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 24.05.2017 g. no 236” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation from May 24, 2017 no. 236], President of Russia, May 24, 2017, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41942>.

to work together in the future.”<sup>99</sup> The National Guard, having assumed many of the duties of the Ministry of Interior, continues to be busy not just with its participation in exercises, but also with units helping to suppress unauthorized protests throughout Russia.

National Guard riot police helped to break up anti-corruption protests in May and June 2017, where thousands of young people participated and hundreds were arrested.<sup>100</sup> General Zolotov said that the true goals of the anti-corruption protests were the creation of chaos and instability.<sup>101</sup> President Putin compared the protests to the Arab Spring and the Euromaidan in Ukraine, saying that it was this sort of tool that led to the Arab Spring and the chaos and coup in Ukraine.<sup>102</sup> It also exactly the sort of tool that likely drove the president to shore up his defenses by ensuring he had an effective counter to protests such as these.

Overall, the creation of the Russian National Guard shows the high importance that the Kremlin gives to combatting the threat of internal instability and political protests, and the continued use of force from elements of the MVD and now National Guard in order to control and disperse protests, such as the anti-corruption protests in May and June 2017, show that the government is going to be pro-active about minimizing the threat. This can be contrasted with the MOD’s efforts, which have resulted in the creation of the NDMC, but whose lack of additional action shows the low priority that the MOD gives the color revolution threat.

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<sup>99</sup> Aleksandr Goltz, “Rosgvardiya podminaet Genshtab” [The Rosgvardia Tramples on the General Staff].

<sup>100</sup> “Hundreds Arrested as Anti-Corruption Protests Sweep Russia,” *The Moscow Times*, March 26, 2017, <http://themoscowtimes.com/articles/hundreds-arrested-as-anti-corruption-protests-sweep-russia-57538>; “National Guard Chief Says Russia’s Recent Anti-Corruption Protests Are the Stuff of ‘Color Revolutions,’” *Meduza*, June 16, 2017, <https://meduza.io/en/news/2017/06/16/national-guard-chief-says-russia-s-recent-anti-corruption-protests-are-the-stuff-of-color-revolutions>.

<sup>101</sup> “National Guard Chief Says Russia’s Recent Anti-Corruption Protests Are the Stuff of ‘Color Revolutions.’”

<sup>102</sup> “Putin Compares Anti-Corruption Protests to ‘Arab Spring’ and ‘Euromaidan,’” *The Moscow Times*, March 30, 2017, <http://themoscowtimes.com/news/putin-compares-anti-corruption-protests-to-arab-spring-and-euromaidan-57586>.



## **B. NATIONAL DEFENSE MANAGEMENT CENTER**

Two of the characteristics of modern conflict that General Gerasimov noted in 2013 were the rapid pace at which crises develop and the need to integrate both military and non-military means in response.<sup>103</sup> In his article on Russia's experience in Syria, the need for the national leadership to be able to quickly and efficiently receive information and make decisions is something he specifically mentioned, noting that the NDMC was a good first step in the effort to allow quicker decision-making by the nation's leadership in a crisis and to assist with operational coordination between Russia's various ministries.<sup>104</sup>

President Putin gave the decision to create the NDMC in May 2013, and it officially opened on December 1, 2014.<sup>105</sup> As its name implies, the center is responsible for overseeing the territorial defense of Russia. To do this, it has two main functions: monitoring ongoing political and military events around the world and coordinating the government's efforts to defend against internal and external threats. The NDMC is essentially an information hub that provides more complete and up-to-date information to the nation's leaders while at the same time providing accurate information about the current state of Russia's forces, allowing for quicker decision making.

These duties are split between the NDMC's Center for Combat Management and the Center for Management of Day-to-Day Activity.<sup>106</sup> The Center for Combat Management continually monitors, analyzes, and assesses current threats and forecasts future ones, allowing Russia to more quickly react as situations both inside and outside of Russia develop. It also manages the employment of Russian forces. The Center for

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<sup>103</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii: Novye vyzovy trebuyut pereosmyslit' formy i sposoby vedeniya boevykh deystviy" [The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Require Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Conducting Military Operations].

<sup>104</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii" [According to the Syrian Experience].

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 199–200.

<sup>106</sup> Igor Solokhov and Oleg Falichev, "Dezhurnyy po strane: tsentr upravleniya oboronoy podvodit itogi pervogo goda raboty" [Duty for the Country: The National Defense Management Center Summarizes the Results of the First Year's Work], *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, November 23, 2015, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/28155>.

Management of Day-to-Day Activity monitors and manages support for Russia's forces, including coordinating with Russia's non-military federal agencies in order to better synchronize the government's efforts.<sup>107</sup>

To better synchronize efforts, the Russian government is currently in the process of expanding the reach of the national management center by creating regional and territorial management centers in order to strengthen the vertical connection and sharing of information between the national and local level. As of May 2017, the NDMC's collaborative defense network includes 73 federal agencies, 85 sub-national components, and 1,320 state corporations and businesses related to the defense industry.<sup>108</sup>

The NDMC is not only growing its network of sensors, it is also improving its capability to efficiently operate and share information. President Putin provided the legal basis for this information sharing in September 2014 with a presidential edict "On the procedure for collecting information in relation to Russian Federation defense issues and for exchanging that information."<sup>109</sup> The following year, the NDMC hosted a conference with the purpose of improving the technical means of sharing information between ministries and agencies. At the conference, General Gerasimov said that while much had been accomplished to improve the coordination of the "power ministries," but much more still had yet to be accomplished.

The creation of the NDMC goes a long way to alleviating the Russian government's potential problems of being able to coordinate and synchronize a government response to crisis. However, while the consolidation of internal security forces and creation of the National Guard seems to be directly in response to the government's fear of mass protests, the creation of the NDMC was likely more a

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<sup>107</sup> Igor Solokhov and Oleg Falichev.

<sup>108</sup> Aleksandr Tikhonov, "Kursom obnovleniya" [Course Update], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, May 26, 2017, <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/33277-kursom-obnovleniya>.

<sup>109</sup> "Ministr oborony general armii Sergey Shoygu prinyal uchastie v rabote pervoy mezhvedomstvennoy konferentsii po informatsionnomu vzaimodeystviyu" [Minister of Defense Army General Sergey Shoygu Took Part in the Work of the First Interdepartmental Conference on Information Interaction], *Ministerstvo oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, November 19, 2015, [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/person/more.htm?id=12066295@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/person/more.htm?id=12066295@egNews).

reaction to the need to coordinate operations abroad, such as in Ukraine and Syria, or to defend against an external threat, than from the need to defend against any internal threat to the current government.

The MOD has done little to innovate and protect against a color revolution. It has expanded the number of military units designated for peacekeeping, adding an additional brigade and several battalions to its peacekeeping force,<sup>110</sup> but the growth of Russia's peacekeeping force cannot really be seen as any sort of innovation or major change, as the use of such forces and their assigned roles in national defense do not seem to have changed. Because of its peripheral position on what the military sees as its primary missions, while it may be a planning consideration, defending against a color revolution will likely not be a driving factor for any changes by Russia's military.

### **C. STRENGTHENED COERCIVE CONTROL**

There is no indication that the Russian government is prepared to drastically increase the level of violence used to suppress protests and internal instability. It simply appears that the government is prepared to use low levels of violence and coercion as frequently as necessary, and the creation of the National Guard seems to facilitate this quick and efficient use of low levels of violence and coercion, strengthening the Kremlin's control over coercive power in Russia.

Additionally, while the National Guard's creation was likely in part a reaction to Russia's history of revolution, it was not created until after the Arab Spring and the 2011/2012 protests in Moscow, and not until President Putin had been in control of Russia for over 16 years. It is not exactly clear why the National Guard was not created until 2016, but this delay seems to imply that a perceived increase in the danger of a Russian color revolution and upcoming presidential elections may have played a part.

The creation of the National Guard and the NDMC has certainly strengthened President Putin's direct control over the coercive elements of power and his ability to synchronize any government response to a crisis, and it does seem more likely that this

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<sup>110</sup> Bartles, "Russia's Indirect and Asymmetric Methods as a Response to the New Western Way of War," 7.

control lessens the likelihood that forces such as the National Guard will lack the leadership that will support the government in the face of a large opposition. However, those forces' capabilities to suppress any such opposition, even if improved, are still finite. For example, even though Ukraine's security forces largely stayed neutral during the protests of the Orange Revolution, roughly 100,000 people protested on the first day, which then grew to approximately 500,000 by the third day, and eventually reached a million protesters.<sup>111</sup> Even with the creation of the National Guard and the help of the army, it seems unlikely that such a crowd in Moscow could be dispersed without the use of large-scale violence. Therefore, Russia's security forces will need help to ensure that protest movements are stopped before such growth can occur.

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<sup>111</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, 140.

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## IV. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Russia's main coercive elements, its internal and external security forces, cannot be expected to handle the issue of organized political protests on their own. Even when those forces have the will to act, there is only so much that these forces can do to control massive protests. Both the Arab Spring and 2014 Ukrainian protests showed governments' inability to deal with protest movements once they become so large as to overwhelm a country's security apparatus. The protests in Moscow in 2011–2012 were the largest Russia had seen since 1993, but even these protests failed to attract the numbers seen in Kiev in 2004 and 2014 or in protests during the Arab Spring, like those seen in Cairo.

Preventing protests from growing too large is essential to preventing a color revolution, because at some point, no security force can maintain control without the widespread use of violence, and large scale protests often signal that an autocratic regime may “already be playing a losing hand.”<sup>112</sup> Russia's success in developing supporting elements to its coercive forces will go a long way towards decreasing the likelihood of large-scale protests by helping to prevent sources of opposition from ever beginning, minimizing and disrupting threats to help prevent them from growing, and supporting the security forces' ability to counter the threat.

This section discusses the legal steps that the Russian government has taken to undercut international financial support for civil society while at the same time providing funding to select organizations. It examines the use of both the media and laws to disrupt and prevent the growth of demonstrations and protests, and it also looks at how pro-government organizations can support the Russian government against the political opposition. Overall, the Russian government has created the tools necessary to support its security forces in suppressing any potential internal threats to the current regime, but the current use of those tools has been selective and an all-out attempt to subvert Russian civil society has not occurred.

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<sup>112</sup> Graeme B. Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 172.

## A. PREVENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THREATS

Bunce and Wolchik argue that, when in conjunction with elections, success is based upon the opposition's ability to follow the electoral model that emerged during the spread of democracy in post-communist states in the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>113</sup> Elements of this model include the ability for the opposition to unify behind one candidate, efforts to combat narratives from state-controlled media, the use of independent domestic and international election monitors, and the use of large, sustained demonstrations that show both the determination and strength of the opposition.<sup>114</sup> During the 2000s, autocratic regimes adapted to the threat, and those that managed to defeat opposition movements largely did so because they were able to repress and split the opposition, isolate the opposition from foreign support, pacify civil society, and raise the cost for participation in protests.<sup>115</sup>

Since the wave of electoral protest movements in the early 2000s, Russia has used several measures to undermine the Russian civil society's ability to organize and support an opposition to the government. In 2006, the Russian government passed Federal Law No. 18-FZ, commonly referred to as the 2006 NGO Law, which increased the government's ability to scrutinize NGOs. It forced organizations to re-register with the government and turn over detailed information on their finances and membership. It placed restrictions on foreign funding for some organizations and allowed the government to continue to monitor these groups' activities.<sup>116</sup> In 2012, Federal Law No. 121-FZ, more commonly known as the "Foreign Agent Law," came into being.<sup>117</sup> After this time, Russian NGOs that participate in political activity, a wide-reaching and vague

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<sup>113</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*.

<sup>114</sup> Sharon L. Wolchik, "Putinism Under Siege: Can There Be a Color Revolution?," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (2012): 64.

<sup>115</sup> Abel Polese and Donnacha Ó Beacháin, "The Color Revolution Virus and Authoritarian Antidotes: Political Protest and Regime Counterattacks in Post-Communist Spaces," *Demokratizatsiya* 19, no. 2 (2011): 121.

<sup>116</sup> Jo Crotty, Sarah Marie Hall, and Sergej Ljubownikow, "Post-Soviet Civil Society Development in the Russian Federation: The Impact of the NGO Law," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, no. 8 (2014): 1254.

<sup>117</sup> This law is officially known as Federal Law No. 121-FZ "On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Non-profit Organisations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent."

category, must register as foreign agents if they receive funding from outside Russia. The government registered the first organization as a foreign agent in June 2013, and since then, 87 additional Russian non-profit organizations have been added to the list.<sup>118</sup>

The Kremlin has not only taken steps to minimize, if not eliminate, foreign funding from Russian civil society, but it has also prohibited many foreign organizations from working in Russia all together or made it more difficult for them to do so. The government forced the closure of the British Council's offices in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg in 2007.<sup>119</sup> The following year, the World Wildlife Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the International Red Cross all lost their tax-exempt status.<sup>120</sup> In October 2012, the Russian government forced USAID to close down its offices and cancel all remaining programming because the organization was supposedly attempting to influence Russia's political processes through its grant-based funding of Russian organizations.<sup>121</sup> Then, in 2015, President Putin signed Federal Law No 129-FZ, also known as the Undesirable Organizations Law. The law in very vague terms allows the government to declare an organization to be undesirable if it poses a threat to the security, public order, or health of Russia and its citizens. Undesirable groups are not permitted to maintain offices or distribute information in Russia, and Russian banks are required to notify the government of these organizations' financial transactions.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, "Information of the Register of NGOs Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent," Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, September 1, 2017, <http://unro.minjust.ru/NKOForeignAgent.aspx>.

<sup>119</sup> Luke Harding, "Russia Orders British Council Offices to Be Shut down," *The Guardian*, December 13, 2007, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/dec/13/russia.lukeharding>.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Orttung, "Kremlin Nationalism versus Russia's NGOs," *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 138 (November 8, 2013): 9.

<sup>121</sup> BBC, "Russia Expels USAID Development Agency," *BBC News*, September 19, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19644897>.

<sup>122</sup> Alec Luhn, "Russia Bans 'Undesirable' International Organisations ahead of 2016 Elections," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2015, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/russia-bans-undesirable-international-organisations-2016-elections>.



Among the most recent undesirable organizations are three groups founded by Mikhail Khodorkovsky.<sup>123</sup> This was the first time that a group founded by a Russian and that focused solely on Russia had been deemed undesirable.<sup>124</sup> Khodorkovsky, whose Open Russia Foundation supported civil society groups in Russia until shortly after his imprisonment, became an example of the dangers for Russians who support NGOs that lobby for any cause that can be deemed political, such as human rights issues. The overall effect of this has been to limit the fundraising ability of Russia's civil society. In general, non-profit organizations, especially those that focus on human rights and political issues, find it difficult to raise funds domestically.

While the Russian government has worked to suppress elements of civil society that it deems a threat, it has also worked to support groups that either stay out of anything deemed political or that support the Kremlin and its policies. The federal and regional Public Chambers created in 2005 allow government-approved elements of civil society to work with the government and attempt to influence policy. These Public Chambers also provide grants to local organizations, and in 2007 provided roughly \$50 million to 1,225 organizations.<sup>125</sup> In 2013, the government budgeted a much larger amount, \$258 million, for its annual grants program.<sup>126</sup> The Public Chamber's funding allows the government to support elements of civil society that are either supportive of or neutral towards the political status quo. Combined with a lack of large-scale private domestic donations and international funding, this makes Russia's civil society more dependent upon continued government favor.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Khodorkovsky's Open Russia Foundation, the Institute for Modern Russia, and the Open Russia Civic Movement were deemed undesirable in addition to earlier undesirable determinations for the National Endowment for Democracy, George Soros' Open Society Foundation, the U.S. Russia Foundation for Economic Advancement and the Rule of Law, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, and the Media Development Investment Fund.

<sup>124</sup> "Russian Authorities Ban Khodorkovsky's Organization Open Russia as 'undesirable,'" Amnesty International, April 26, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/russian-authorities-ban-khodorkovskys-organization-open-russia-as-undesirable/>.

<sup>125</sup> Graeme B. Robertson, "Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 3 (2009): 541.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Orttung, "Kremlin Nationalism versus Russia's NGOs," 9.

<sup>127</sup> Robertson, "Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia," 541.

## B. MINIMIZING AND DISRUPTING GROWING THREATS

The concept of diffusion explains how a small protest can grow larger and spread from one city to many other cities, as was seen in the pensioners' protests in 2005.<sup>128</sup> Since the pensioners' protests, preventing diffusion has become even more difficult as modern technology and the Internet have made communications methods more accessible and decentralized in the past decade. However, Russian authorities have taken several steps that can help to stop the growth and spread of protests.

Russia's media have assisted in the effort to contain the growth of protest movements, whether they be political or economic in nature. It frequently denigrates the motives of the organizations attempting to organize protests, accusing them of working for foreign entities, and greatly underrepresents the amount of support for and size of the protests in order to discourage people from joining. For example, during the pensioners' protest, local television warned residents not to get involved in the protests, accused the protest organizers of being outsiders who took legitimate economic grievances and manipulated the local population into supporting politicized causes, and helped to encourage pro-government counter-protests.<sup>129</sup>

The Russian media have also done the opposite with regard to its coverage of protests by simply ignoring them. As recently as the spring of 2017, Russian long-distance truckers protested against increased tolls for using federal roads. These protests have spread over most parts of the country, and while estimates of the number of participants vary, as many as 10,000 truckers may have protested at some point.<sup>130</sup> However, while Russia's mass media have covered the issue of anger about the increased tolls, the media have mostly been silent about the truckers' protests. Even when the

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<sup>128</sup> Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik define diffusion as "a process whereby new ideas, institutions, policies, models, or repertoires of behavior spread geographically from a core site to new sites, whether within a given state...or across states." From Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, 17; Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia*, 175.

<sup>129</sup> Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia*, 179.

<sup>130</sup> Darya Garmonenko, "Dal'noboyshchiki vybrali taktiku Gandi" [Truckers Chose the Tactics of Gandi], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, May 4, 2017, [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2017-04-05/3\\_6966\\_gandy.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2017-04-05/3_6966_gandy.html).

National Guard and some regular army troops were necessary to help confront the protesters, the media failed to cover it. With the government also blocking a messaging app commonly used by long-distance truckers, protesters were largely on their own. Their inability to communicate with other protesters and learn about what was going on in other parts of the country with regards to the protest discouraged protesters from continuing in their efforts and limited the ability of the protests to inspire others to follow suit.<sup>131</sup>

Apart from the media's indirect effect to disrupt the ability for groups to organize and protest, the Russian government has taken legal steps to disrupt rallies, inhibit people from participating, and make it more difficult for organizers to hold subsequent events. Passed in conjunction with increased fines for participating in and organizing unauthorized rallies, new laws made event organizers responsible for the actions of their events' attendees. This puts event organizers in a difficult position, because it is impossible to control exactly who attends events, and the organizers are held responsible for the actions even of those unaffiliated with the organizing group. This essentially gives pro-government groups the ability to create legal trouble for opposition organizers. Also, because events are authorized for a maximum number of demonstrators, outside groups who tag along at an event can also create trouble for the organizers. Infractions of either kind can lead to fines and a prohibition for the organizers of such an event to organize another one.<sup>132</sup>

The Russian government has also worked to undercut protesters' motivation during elections stemming from the perception of fraudulent elections. A critical point of vulnerability for autocratic governments occurs during elections, which by definition necessitate some sort of political competition, even if it is in name only. In elections frequently riddled with fraud, outside election monitors conducting exit polling and parallel vote tabulation have played a large role in documenting how incumbent regimes have used their strength to corrupt the process in order to remain in power, and these outside election monitors played a large role in the success of the color revolutions in the

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<sup>131</sup> Georgy Bovt, "The (Hushed Up) Story of Russia's Trucker Revolt," Intersection, April 14, 2017, <http://intersectionproject.eu/article/politics/hushed-story-russias-trucker-revolt>.

<sup>132</sup> Miriam Lansky and Elspeth Suthers, "Outlawing the Opposition," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2013): 78.

early 2000s.<sup>133</sup> Part of what helped to mobilize people to protest against Slobodan Milosevic after the Serbian presidential elections in 2000 was that people generally believed that the election results publicized by the Serbian NGO, the Center for Elections and Democracy, were in fact the real results, as opposed to those published by the government.<sup>134</sup>

Russia has led the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries in pushing back against such “selective increased attention” and “double standards” from independent and international election monitors.<sup>135</sup> It has attempted to both slow down the publication of any reports from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election monitors and to require each member state to concur with the OSCE election monitors’ conclusions before their publication. Russia has also led efforts to create “zombie election monitors” that work to undercut traditional election monitoring groups by contradicting them and certifying that an election was free and fair.<sup>136</sup> Founded in Russia in 2003, the CIS Election Monitoring Organization declared every election in CIS countries through 2006 to have been free and fair, with one exception. That exception was the rerun of Ukraine’s presidential election in 2004 in which Russia’s preferred candidate, Victor Yanukovich, was defeated. The CIS Election Monitoring Organization has continued to certify elections since then and generally comes to the opposite conclusion about the legitimacy of an election from that of the OSCE.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*, 70; Rick Fawn, “Battle over the Box: International Election Observation Missions, Political Competition and Retrenchment in the Post-Soviet Space,” *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1140.

<sup>134</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*, 112.

<sup>135</sup> Eugen Tomiuc, “OSCE: Several CIS States Rebuke Democracy Watchdog,” RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, July 9, 2004, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1053776.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Alexander Cooley, “Countering Democratic Norms,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 3 (2015): 55.

<sup>137</sup> Fawn, “Battle over the Box: International Election Observation Missions, Political Competition and Retrenchment in the Post-Soviet Space,” 1144.

### C. SUPPORTING RUSSIA'S SECURITY FORCES TO COPE WITH THREATS

The Russian government has numerous organizations that can be used as tools to control and disperse protests and political opposition movement. However, because the Russian government does not have blanket censorship over information, especially on the Internet, and Russian citizens do enjoy political freedoms, more pressure is placed on the country's coercive organizations when organized political opposition emerges, and these organizations are "more restricted in the application of open coercion than is typically the case in closed authoritarian regimes."<sup>138</sup>

However, Russia's security organizations do have some support in this effort. One element supporting Russia's internal security forces are groups that call themselves Cossacks.<sup>139</sup> In September 2012, President Putin signed a Cossack development plan that allowed for these self-described Cossack groups to be hired on a contractual basis in order to, among other things, assist the police in protecting public order.<sup>140</sup> When sufficient numbers of official police and security are not available to handle security for events and infrastructure, or during large protests, the Cossacks may be an efficient and effective supplement to the security that the government can provide.<sup>141</sup> In the past, they have been used to break up rallies and other events, and during the Winter Olympics in Sochi, almost a thousand Cossacks helped to provide security, supplementing the police presence at transportation infrastructure sites and at competition venues.<sup>142</sup>

Other groups also exist that could, in theory, come to the government's aid in a time of crisis. The motorcycle group Night Wolves is one such group. The Night Wolves

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<sup>138</sup> Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia*, 173.

<sup>139</sup> "Will the Counter-Revolution Come on Horseback?," *The Moscow Times*, October 27, 2017, <http://themoscowtimes.com/news/will-the-counter-revolution-come-on-horseback-17789>.

<sup>140</sup> Natalya Gorodetskaya, "Kazaki sobralis' v les, na granitsu i vo vlast'" [Cossacks Gathered in the Forest, on the Border, and in Power], *Kommersant*, October 17, 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Konstantin Sivkov, "Kazachestvo kak novyy rod voysk" [Cossackry as a New Type of Troops], *Voенно-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, March 10, 2014, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/19450>.

<sup>142</sup> Amar Toor, "Meet the Cossacks Handing out Vigilante Justice in Sochi," *The Verge*, February 21, 2014, <https://www.theverge.com/2014/2/21/5432742/meet-the-cossacks-handing-out-vigilante-justice-in-sochi>.

are proud supporters of the government and Orthodox Church, and while they have not taken an active role in suppressing protests inside Russia, they have participated in events outside of the country, receiving recognition from the Russian government for assisting in actions leading up to Crimea's annexation. The group was also present in Lugansk in early 2014, where it assisted in raising the first barricades in the city during the beginnings of eastern Ukraine's separatist movement.<sup>143</sup>

The government has also helped to develop organizations that indirectly counter opposition groups. One such group that the government used in the past was the Russian youth movement, Nashi, which had been used to undercut opposition protests. During the 2007 elections, Nashi organized a rally of 15,000 pro-government youth, demonstrating support for Putin's regime and pushing out any possible opposition rallies. As Vladimir Frolov of the Fund for Effective Politics said, "Nashi's job will be to occupy every public square in front of every public building of importance...Nashi is a weapon against nationalist popular movements like the ones that brought Mikhail Saakashvili and Victor Yushchenko to power."<sup>144</sup> The Kremlin got this "weapon" for cheap, costing only unofficial support and 6 million and 15 million rubles through the awarding of grants in 2007 and 2008, respectively.<sup>145</sup>

#### **D. AN INCOMPLETE AND HALF-HEARTED SUPPRESSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

The Russian government's actions and the other elements discussed earlier do have the overall effect of decreasing the possibility of a large and organized political opposition movement from developing, and they support the country's security forces in suppressing those that might. However, these actions should not be perceived as a coordinated and well-executed strategy, and their sole purpose should not be thought of

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<sup>143</sup> Oleg Roldugin, "Kak baykery 'Nochnye volki' stali politicheskoy staey" [How the Bikers 'Night wolves' Became a Political Flock], *Sobesednik*, June 30, 2014, <https://sobesednik.ru/rassledovanie/20140630-kak-baykery-nochnye-volki-stali-politicheskoy-staey>.

<sup>144</sup> Peter Lavelle, "RP's Weekly Experts' Panel: 'Nashi' - Building Civil Society or a Kremlin Jackboot?," August 19, 2005, <http://courses.wcupa.edu/rbove/eco343/050Compecon/Soviet/Russia/050819Nashi.txt>.

<sup>145</sup> Robertson, "Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia," 544.

as suppressing a color revolution. The government's development of new laws pertaining to civil society is a good example of the lack of a tightly coordinated strategy, while its funding for civil society provides an example of the lack of a singular purpose.

The 2012 Foreign Agents Law was ambiguous as to which organizations would classify as a foreign agent, and it also saw only periodic government interest in enforcing the law. After the law went into effect, many organizations simply refused to register as foreign agents, and the Justice Ministry showed a general disinterest in seeking action against them. In January 2013, the Justice Ministry declared that it could take up to two years to determine the process for declaring an organization to be a foreign agent, and then in February, the ministry decided not to declare either the Levada Center or Golos to be foreign agents.<sup>146</sup> However, after President Putin addressed the Federal Security Service (FSB) leadership later in the month, making it clear that the law should be enforced, hundreds of investigations began looking at civil society organizations. By that July, Yury Chaika, Russia's Prosecutor General, announced that the government had found 22 organizations working as foreign agents.<sup>147</sup> However, the campaign against foreign agents died out after that summer just as quickly as it had started, and "[w]hat had seemed like an intense crackdown, suddenly lost steam, leaving the NGOs to continue working, but always in doubt about their ultimate fate."<sup>148</sup>

Like the introduction of laws affecting Russia's civil society, Russia's funding of civil society groups through the Public Chamber's annual grant program also lacks the singular focus and concerted effort one would expect if this were simply an attempt to undermine Russia's political opposition. The Public Chamber's grant program has not been one sided in its support for pro-government organizations. For example, the Night Wolves had received some funding every year since 2012, but even though they applied for funding in 2017, the group was not among the winning grantees. Additionally, several groups that had previously been determined by the Justice Ministry to be foreign

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<sup>146</sup> Lansky and Suthers, "Outlawing the Opposition," 80.

<sup>147</sup> Orttung, "Kremlin Nationalism versus Russia's NGOs," 10.

<sup>148</sup> Orttung, 10.

agents—the NGO Development Center, the Samara Province charitable fund, and the Levada Center—all received government grants in 2017.<sup>149</sup>

Russia's enforcement of its laws affecting NGOs and its funding of civil society may be a case of the right hand not talking to the left, meaning not all parts of the government are coordinating their efforts to undermine potential support for the political opposition, or it may be that the steps the Russian government has taken do not have the singular purpose of undermining such potential support. Either way, the laws still remain on the books; the Russian government has a much tighter control over the funding of civil society within its borders; and it still has organizations that can help the security forces deter and suppress any large-scale protests.

The government's actions have shown an ability to inhibit the diffusion of protests throughout Russia, but one of the most discussed causes of the color revolutions is the diffusion of ideas and methods not within countries, but from country to country. In order to prevent events abroad from emboldening Russia's internal opposition and increasing the chances of a Russian color revolution, the Russian military needs to support its allies and help those countries prevent color revolutions of their own.

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<sup>149</sup> Olga Churakova and Elena Muhametshina, "Inostrannye agenti poluchili prezidentskie granti" [Foreign Agents Receive Presidential Grants], *Vedomosti*, August 1, 2017, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2017/08/01/727267-inostrannie-agenti-granti>.



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## V. PARTNERS AND ALLIES

Russia frequently acts as what Jakob Tolstrup describes as a “black knight.” Black knights are “external actors...that act as guardians of autocracy or challengers of democracy.”<sup>150</sup> As a black knight, Russia acts according to what it sees as its best interests, desiring to have like-minded neighbors and stability in its region. Russia’s desire for like-minded neighbors is understandable, for just as democracies tend to promote democracy, autocracies tend to promote other autocratic regimes.<sup>151</sup>

While autocrats, and in this case Russia, generally prefer to have like-minded neighbors, Russia also needs allies who can help to prevent the diffusion of color revolutions. While some scholars downplay the importance of diffusion as an important variable leading to non-violent regime changes, others argue that it is one of the more important factors in a successful revolution.<sup>152</sup> If Russia wants to decrease the likelihood of mass protests aimed at regime change in Russia, then it must not simply suppress the protest potential of its own people, but must focus on its neighbors as well, making an ideological forward line of defense beyond Russia’s borders a necessity. This idea was summed by Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov, now the President of the Academy for Geopolitical Problems, when he said that “preventing ‘color revolutions’ means not only operations directly on our own territory, but also protecting our neighbors and allies. In the present situation, we must arm Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan and help

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<sup>150</sup> Jakob Tolstrup, “Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Why and How Russia Supports Authoritarian Incumbents in Post-Soviet States,” *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (2015): 676.

<sup>151</sup> Julia Bader, Jörn Grävingholt, and Antje Kästner, “Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy? A Political Economy Perspective on Regime-Type Export in Regional Neighbourhoods,” *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 86.

<sup>152</sup> Lucan Way, “The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 55–69; Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*; Valerie Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, “Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions,” *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 4 (2006): 5–18; Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, “Getting Real About ‘Real Causes,’” *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 1 (2009): 69–73; Kurt Weyland, “The Diffusion of revolution: ‘1848’ in Europe and Latin America,” *International Organization* 63, no. 3 (2009): 391–423; Mark R. Beissinger, “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 2 (2007): 259–276.

Turkmenistan, where soon things may flare up, and then other countries will follow in a chain reaction.”<sup>153</sup>

Efforts to predict, prevent, and defeat color revolutions cannot be a Russian priority alone if those efforts are to be effective. As a part of Russia’s desire to keep liberal democracy at bay and support the status quo among its autocratic neighbors, those same neighbors’ support is crucial. Russia has done this through the CIS and the previously mentioned CIS Election Monitoring Organization, but it is also attempting to do this through the collective security function of the CSTO.<sup>154</sup> CSTO support may be crucial in providing legitimacy to any Russian interventions abroad in former Soviet countries, such as Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its support for the separatist movement in Lugansk and Donetsk in eastern Ukraine.

This section examines the possibility of Russian support to one of its neighbors in the event of an attempted color revolution and the assistance other CSTO members may provide as well. It also looks at the level of political support that Russia’s closest allies have provided in support of Russian actions abroad. It shows that while the mechanisms exist for Russia and the CSTO as a whole to assist its neighbors during an attempted color revolution, CSTO approval for intervention is unlikely, and the CSTO countries are apathetic in their support for Russian intervention abroad.

#### **A. RUSSIAN SUPPORT FOR LIKE-MINDED ALLIES**

In order for Russia to more effectively protect stability and autocracy in its geographic neighborhood, Russia must maintain the support of its allies, and the most likely source of such support is the CSTO. Article 2 of the CSTO’s founding agreement on collective security states that when a member faces a threat to its security, sovereignty, or territorial integrity, the other member states shall coordinate their response and take

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<sup>153</sup> Anton Marsadov, “‘Tsvetnaya kontrevolyutsiya’ poruchena Genshtaby” [A ‘Color Counter-Revolution’ is being Entrusted to the General Staff].

<sup>154</sup> The CSTO is an international security alliance created in 1992. Its current members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

steps to eliminate the threat.<sup>155</sup> While the purpose of CSTO in the minds of the leaders who signed on to it may have begun as one of collective defense from external military threats, like NATO's Article 5, the color revolutions of the early 2000s may have influenced those leaders who prefer the current status quo in their countries to see the CSTO as a way of enlisting Russian support against internal regime opponents.<sup>156</sup>

One of the CSTO's guiding principles is collective defense against external aggression, but could this be used to justify a CSTO role against internal discord within member states as well? Starting in 2011, Russian officials began encouraging a debate in the CSTO about allowing outside assistance in a member country because of that country's internal instability.<sup>157</sup> This argument has not come out of nowhere. It follows an ongoing series of CSTO exercises that seem to point to the possibility of CSTO joint forces being used in such a way.

After the color revolutions of the early 2000s, several CSTO exercises seemed to focus on legitimizing international cooperation to defeat foreign attempts to support a domestic opposition whose goal was regime change.<sup>158</sup> In 2005, exercises took place in Tajikistan in the immediate aftermath of the Tulip Revolution in nearby Kyrgyzstan. During the exercises, CSTO units fought an enemy attempting to use popular discontent with an election to overthrow the incumbent government. An exercise the following year, Frontier-2006, had a similar scenario, where in the aftermath of an election, an external force, this time a terrorist organization, was attempting to create an Islamic caliphate in the Central Asian region. Additionally, Frontier-2006 also included a "brown" force that represented a non-CSTO nation state attempting to take advantage of the situation in

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<sup>155</sup> "Dogovor o kollektivnoy bezopastnosti" [Collective Security Treaty], Collective Security Treaty Organizations, 2017, [http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=126](http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=126).

<sup>156</sup> Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 140.

<sup>157</sup> Roy Allison, 144; Vladimir Socor, "Russia Proposes to Codify Intervention Right Via CSTO," Jamestown Foundation, September 14, 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-proposes-to-codify-intervention-right-via-csto/>.

<sup>158</sup> Vitali Silitski, "'Survival of the Fittest': Domestic and International Dimensions of the Authoritarian Reaction in the Former Soviet Union Following the Colored Revolutions," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 348.

order to expand its influence in the region.<sup>159</sup> Tsentr-2011 was another exercise in which units from CSTO countries participated toward a similar purpose. Among one of the largest joint exercises up to that point with around 12,000 soldiers participating, the exercise focused on responding to scenarios similar to the instability and mass protests that had recently been seen in Syria and Libya.<sup>160</sup>

More recently, Russia has expanded its potential set of allies by conducting an exercise in 2015 with Serbia. Slavic Brotherhood 2015 saw Serbian troops training with Russians and Belarusians in order to prevent a repeat of what happened in Ukraine in 2014. The exercise focused on “preventing unrest and agitation” and “detecting and destroying the training center for illegal armed groups.”<sup>161</sup> However, while joint exercises are great for building relationships between military forces and for improving joint interoperability, they don’t necessarily translate into the willingness or ability to use those joint forces during a crisis, which is something the CSTO has yet to do.

Kyrgyzstan experienced such a crisis starting in April 2010 during a reversal of the Tulip Revolution. Kurmanbek Bakiyev was ousted from power in Bishkek, and several months later, ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan left several thousand people dead and several hundred thousand internally displaced. While Russia did send a few hundred soldiers to reinforce its existing military locations, neither it nor any of the other CSTO countries did anything to stop the violence or re-stabilize the country.

Russia’s non-intervention may have been because it was behind the effort to unseat Bakiyev from power in the first place.<sup>162</sup> Alternatively, or perhaps in addition to that reason, Russia may have realized that it lacked both an adequately trained force and the political will to intervene.<sup>163</sup> Nikolai Bordyuzha, the Secretary General of the CSTO

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<sup>159</sup> Silitski, 348.

<sup>160</sup> Erica Marat, “Tsentr-2011 Gambles On Central Asia’s Participation,” Eurasia Daily Monitor, September 30, 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/tsentr-2011-gambles-on-central-asias-participation/>.

<sup>161</sup> Sputnik News, “‘Slavic Brotherhood’ Exercises Aimed at Crushing Potential Maidan Scenario,” Sputnik News, March 9, 2015, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201509031026549545-slavic-brotherhood-russia-serbia-belarus/>.

<sup>162</sup> Pan, “Russia Is Said to Have Fueled Unrest in Kyrgyzstan.”

<sup>163</sup> Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, 143.

at the time, stated that the conflict in Kyrgyzstan was “purely a domestic affair.”<sup>164</sup> President Medvedev stated that, “only in the case of a foreign intrusion and an attempt to externally seize power can we state that there is an attack against the CSTO.”<sup>165</sup> In reaction to the CSTO’s lack of assistance to Kyrgyzstan, President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus said, “[w]hat sort of organization is this one, if there is bloodshed in one of our member states and an anti-constitutional coup d’état takes place, and this body keeps silent?”<sup>166</sup>

Part of the problem with any external response to defend against a color revolution in the CSTO can be that deciding whether or not foreign intrusion and an external attempt to seize power has occurred is very subjective. For example, a strong case can be made that the West had a direct hand in the electoral defeat of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000 as a part of the Bulldozer Revolution, but the case for direct Western involvement in the Tulip Revolution or the Arab Spring is much weaker. As a result, it is very unclear as to when CSTO support for one of its members is required, and if the legitimacy of a post-election government is in debate, it may also be unclear if CSTO intervention is allowed.

## **B. CSTO SUPPORT FOR RUSSIAN ACTIONS ABROAD**

While Russia has established the mechanisms to intervene outside its borders on a multilateral basis, its interventions thus far have been done unilaterally. Russia chose not to get CSTO permission for its actions in the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. Perhaps it chose not to because of the delay such CSTO consultations would require, or perhaps it was because of the limitations that CSTO concurrence / participation might place on Russian actions. However, in September 2008, the CSTO countries did condemn

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<sup>164</sup> Miriam Elder, “Kyrgyzstan Tests Russia’s Regional Commitments,” Public Radio International, June 15, 2010, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2010-06-15/kyrgyzstan-tests-russias-regional-commitments>.

<sup>165</sup> Miriam Elder.

<sup>166</sup> Andrei Makhovsky, “Belarus Leader Raps Russia, May Snub Security Summit,” Reuters, April 25, 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-russia-idUSTRE63O0PT20100425>.

Georgia's actions in the lead-up to the conflict.<sup>167</sup> The CSTO response to the war seems to justify Russia's actions, but it falls short of endorsing them. Associated with the conflict in Georgia, Russia is the only country in the CSTO or larger CIS to formally recognize the independence of Abkhazia or South Ossetia, which is just another example of Russia's inability to garner its allies' public support for Russia's preferred policies.

Russia's actions in Ukraine provide another example of the CSTO countries providing an almost half-hearted acceptance of Russian actions. Except for the organization's Secretary General, the CSTO has been largely silent on what is occurring in Ukraine. The United Nations resolution on Russia's annexation of Crimea provided a mixed result for Russia as well. While Armenia and Belarus sided with Russia by recognizing Crimea's right to vote to secede from Ukraine and join Russia, initially, Kazakhstan abstained and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan did not participate in the voting at all.<sup>168</sup>

When Russia intervened in Syria on behalf of Bashar al-Assad's government in order to defend against what Russia would describe as an ongoing color revolution, it again did so absent any support from CSTO or CIS countries. Done largely at the behest of the Iranians, Russia's response is an example of its support for its autocratic allies.<sup>169</sup> This unilateral intervention could change to a multilateral one if Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who are reportedly open to the idea of supporting a CSTO peacekeeping mission in Syria under the right conditions, were to provide forces to support Russia's efforts at protecting Assad.<sup>170</sup> However, this seems unlikely, and from a practical

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<sup>167</sup> RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, "Security Treaty Leaders Condemn Georgia For Aggression," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, accessed July 23, 2017, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Security\\_Treaty\\_Leaders\\_Condemn\\_Georgia\\_For\\_Aggression\\_/1196765.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Security_Treaty_Leaders_Condemn_Georgia_For_Aggression_/1196765.html).

<sup>168</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Discussion and Notes of Draft Resolution A/68/L.39" (New York: United Nations, March 27, 2014), 17, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/PV.80](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/PV.80).

<sup>169</sup> Brian Glyn Williams and Robert Souza, "Operation 'Retribution': Putin's Military Campaign in Syria, 2015–16," *Middle East Policy* 23, no. 4 (2016): 43.

<sup>170</sup> Joshua Kucera, "Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Under Right Conditions, Open to Deployment to Syria," EurasiaNet, June 23, 2017, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/84106>.

standpoint, legal restrictions make it difficult for either country to send its forces abroad even if its leaders wished to do so.<sup>171</sup>

### C. RUSSIA'S APATHETIC ANTI-COLOR REVOLUTION ALLIES

The level of political support that Russia receives from its allies is largely lukewarm, where they refrain from outright defiance of Moscow's wishes but do not put themselves out on a limb in support of their larger neighbor. Russia has been able to get some cooperation concerning the ability to use CSTO forces in response to internal aggression, but has not been able to get full agreement on the ability to use such a force in practice.<sup>172</sup> For example, while Belarussian President Lukashenko condemned the CSTO's lack of action in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, Belarus generally abstains from CSTO activities in the Central Asian States anyway, and the other Central Asian members of the CSTO were supposedly opposed to any intervention in the Kyrgyz crisis even though Kyrgyzstan's transitional government did ask for Russian military assistance in June of that year.<sup>173</sup>

The CSTO's Secretary General has addressed this general issue of a lack of unified CSTO action. Bordyuzha has said that he recognizes the difficulty in getting the CSTO members to approve a timely response when situations are constantly changing, that the presence of an external actor may be debated and make any potential response more difficult, and that there remains a requirement for the recognized authority in a country to approve a CSTO-led intervention in order for it to be legal.<sup>174</sup> Russia has attempted to simplify or eliminate these problems, but changes to the CSTO that might

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<sup>171</sup> Uran Botobekov, "Russia Wants CSTO Allies to Deploy to Syria," Jamestown Foundation, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-wants-csto-allies-deploy-syria/>.

<sup>172</sup> Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, 147.

<sup>173</sup> Elena Kropatcheva, "Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation: Multilateral Policy or Unilateral Ambitions?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 9 (2016): 1539.

<sup>174</sup> Feodor Lukyanov and Arkady Dubnov, "Intervyu generalnogo sekretarya ODKB Nikolaya Bordyuzhi agentstvu RIA Novosti, gazete 'Moskovskie novosti' i zhurnalu 'Rossiya v globalnoi politike'" [Interview of the CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha with RIA Novosti, the Newspaper 'Moscow News,' and the Journal 'Russian in Global Politics'], *Russia in Global Affairs*, November 21, 2012, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/event/Intervyu-generalnogo-sekretarya-ODKB-Nikolaya-Bordyuzhi-agentstvu-RIA-Novosti-gazete-Moskovskie-novo>.



strengthen Russia's ability to intervene in a conflict without full CSTO support have not been forthcoming.<sup>175</sup>

Exercises are another symptom of this half-hearted desire to support Moscow's goals and do not truly demonstrate a commitment to action by any of the countries involved. This is a common theme seen even when other major powers host exercises. Smaller countries are more than willing to participate in exercises sponsored by their larger allies when the financial costs involved for the participating countries are small compared to the training, support, and sometimes military infrastructure that the larger country provides. For example, the importance of Serbia's participation in Slavic Brotherhood 2015 should not be overstated, since the Serbs provided only one company of soldiers, and Russia shouldered the burden of that company's transportation to and from the event as well as providing the equipment and supplies that the Serbs needed to participate.<sup>176</sup>

Even Belarus, Russia's partner in the Union State and in Zapad 2017, seems to be hesitant about and not fully supportive of its larger neighbor. Belarus approved its most recent military doctrine in January 2016, and Russia seems to have convinced its Union State partner that the threat of a color revolution is real, as color revolutions appear to now be a top security threat for Belarus.<sup>177</sup> The same appears to be true for Kazakhstan, who recently inserted similar language into its new military doctrine.<sup>178</sup> The problem for Russia, however, is that both of these two CSTO members also appear to believe that Russia as well as the West could be the external source for color revolutions in their country. Russia may deny involvement in eastern Ukraine, but its neighbors certainly don't seem to believe it, and this will make it even more difficult for Russia to get the support and cooperation from its neighbors that it may need in the future.

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<sup>175</sup> Vladimir Socor, "Medvedev's Think-Tank Proposes Reinforcing Russia-Led CSTO (Part Two)," Jamestown Foundation, September 9, 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/medvedevs-think-tank-proposes-reinforcing-russia-led-csto-part-two/>.

<sup>176</sup> Sputnik News, "'Slavic Brotherhood' Exercises Aimed at Crushing Potential Maidan Scenario."

<sup>177</sup> Yauheni Preiherman, "Belarus Prepares to Adopt New Military Doctrine," Jamestown, accessed November 3, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/belarus-prepares-to-adopt-new-military-doctrine/>.

<sup>178</sup> Anna Gussarova, "Kazakhstan Adopts New Military Doctrine," Jamestown, October 23, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstan-adopts-new-military-doctrine/>.

With the possible exception of its actions in Syria, where Russia acted without CSTO support but where it did have Iranian support, Russia has yet to obtain truly external support for its military actions outside its borders. Its unilateral actions in Georgia and Ukraine certainly have not helped to build trust between Russia and the other former communist states and may be one reason that none of them have backed up words of support for Russia with deeds. While the example of Russia in Syria seems to confirm that Russia may indeed be willing to come to the aid of one of its autocratic allies in crisis, it still seems unlikely that one of those neighbors will ask for Russian assistance before the situation has gotten too far out of control for the Russian military to do anything other than help fight a war.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

At some level, color revolutions are perceived in both the Russian MOD and the Kremlin to be threats. In speaking about the color revolution threat and the influence foreign organizations such as the U.S.'s National Endowment for Democracy have on internal political conditions in Russia, General Baluyevsky said that he "cannot believe in the altruism and disinterest of the generous American donors. Such funds are only used for brainwashing."<sup>179</sup> His opinion depicts a cultural difference between Russia and the United States, and it may be part of the cause for Russians to see a link between external forces and the color revolution threat where others do not. The Russians link the efforts of Western government agencies, privately-funded foundations, and former military officers as working in common cause to undermine the internal stability of other countries, which has only heightened the urgency for some in Russia to protect against the threat.<sup>180</sup>

In the early 2000s, this threat was not taken as seriously in Russia, perhaps because of President Putin's high approval rating and the rising standard of living in Russia, but since the Arab Spring and the 2011/2012 Moscow protests, the color revolution threat has been widely discussed. Those Russians discussing the threat have hit upon most of its elements, such as the use of peaceful protests, the organizing role of domestic civil society with some level of support from foreign organizations, and the role of youth in social movements. Curiously though, while color revolutions are most commonly understood as taking place in conjunction with either presidential or parliamentary elections, only Belsky and Klimenko discuss this connection. This is especially worth noting, because if a Russian color revolution should ever occur, it seems most likely that it would occur in conjunction with a national-level election.

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<sup>179</sup> Yuri Baluyevsky, "Voyna ne konchaetsya, ona - zamiraet" [War does not end - it Freezes].

<sup>180</sup> One former military officer is COL(R) Robert Helvey, who, while working for the International Republican Institute, helped to train and organize the student youth movement, Otpor, on how to non-violently oppose the Serbian president at the time, Slobodan Milosevic.

While the color revolution threat seems to be understood reasonably well in Russia, even if there is an overemphasis on the role that the West has played in its development, the reactions from the MOD and the Kremlin have differed. This thesis examined two possible sources that may have affected the MOD's response: bureaucracy and Russian military culture. One of those sources, bureaucracy, also affects the bureaucratic machine that runs the Kremlin, but Russia's military culture may be playing a role in why the MOD's response has been both smaller and slower to develop than other non-military efforts.

The Kremlin's non-military efforts to minimize the threat of a color revolution, such as cutting off Russian civil society from sources of foreign funding, were largely carried out in the years immediately after the color revolutions of the early 2000s. This response may have initially satisfied those in the Kremlin that felt most threatened, but the 2011/2012 Moscow protests laid against the backdrop of a Russian economy in decline and the ongoing Arab Spring protests may have convinced many in the Kremlin that a Russian color revolution might actually be possible. This may have been a driving factor for the increased attention paid to the threat starting in 2012. The escalation in the perceived color revolution threat may have also prompted President Putin to push the MOD into at least some sort of reaction, even though the MOD still has yet to make any major changes specifically related to defending against a color revolution.

The NDMC will certainly help Russia coordinate a response to any internal or external crisis, but its creation is more a reaction to the changing nature of war and not specifically because of the color revolution threat. While Russia's military operation in Syria can be seen as an attempt to defend against a color revolution, Russia's intervention did not come until it was clear that Assad would be ousted from power without additional assistance. Likewise, the Russians did not act in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, and they did not act in Ukraine in 2013. In Ukraine, their response only came as a "counterattack" once President Yushchenko had already lost power. Should a serious internal crisis break out in Central Asia or Belarus, it remains to be seen whether or not the effected country would welcome Russian / CSTO assistance, and even if it did, it remains to be seen if Russia would act in time.

In the end, the asymmetry between Russia's military and non-military responses may not matter. Russia's non-military efforts have undercut the ability of any person or organization to create the organized political opposition that would be necessary to seriously challenge President Putin electorally. Even if a group did manage to organize large protests like the ones seen in Moscow in 2011 and 2012, the creation of the National Guard provides the government with a more reliable and effective tool to help prevent such protests' growth. The military, while still very relevant for Russian offensive efforts to change the status quo abroad, has less to do with protecting the current status quo at home.

As a spectator to Russia's reaction to the color revolution threat, the West must understand how its democratization efforts in the 1990s and 2000s helped to drive the Russian reaction. This reaction includes Russia's efforts to defend against the threat, and also how Russia is currently using its lessons learned to expand Russian influence. Further research should look at how Russia's understanding of color revolutions has influenced its non-military efforts in Europe and the United States. Additionally, future research should look at what Western countries can learn from Russia's defensive efforts, using that knowledge to strengthen their own defenses against Russian influence in their society, politics, and elections. Such understanding will be essential if Russia ever tries to create its own color revolution.

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